THE LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor: R. PALME DUTT

Volume 6 February, 1924 Number 2

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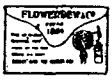

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NOTES of the MONTH

Enter the Class Struggle—White Guards Emerge—Let the Issue be Faced—On Whose Side ?—The Bourgeoisie and the Labour Government—Their Calculation—The Ever-open Trap—The Way Out

BEFORE the Labour Government has come to power, immediate issues have faced it. " Suddenly," writes Mr. Brailsford, " an item which none of us foresaw has been written on the order paper." They had been thinking in terms of foreign policy, of housing legislation, of unemployment relief, of educational reform. And by a sudden symbolic event, they found themselves at the very outset and threshold of their career face to face with—the class struggle. It was disconcerting. It was exasperating. It aroused the most unseemly outbursts within the movement, and produced a flood of abuse from the opportunist socialists against the men who were daring to resist a reduction in wages. Gone was all the talk of better wages. Rival unionism was brought into play. Manifestos of solidarity with the railway companies were issued. All the capitalist Press idols of " public opinion," the sacred principles of " conciliation " and " collective bargaining," were proclaimed in the Labour Press. The men were held up to view as " relatively highly paid." The men's leader who was performing his duty of carrying out a duly reached ballot of the men with a six-to-one majority was denounced, in the best approved fashion of the gutter Press, as an irresponsible hothead and an " egoist."

IT was not a pretty picture. The actual occasion was by comparison small: the issue a simple one of resistance to an attack on wages and conditions. But it revealed as in a flash the whole elements of the situation and the issues that are going to have to be faced in this country. The panic was exaggerated, but it brought out and compelled definite statements of one section after another as to where they stood in relation to the class struggle. The future White Guards proclaimed themselves. From now onwards the type of issue of which we have had a foretaste will

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recur. It will recur on a larger and larger scale, and on more and more formidable questions, until it reaches the final issue of civil war itself. It is well that the question should be brought up thus sharply at the outset, for it is the supreme question. There is a feeling of nervousness in many quarters with regard to it, a desire not to approach it, a notion that to consider it too closely would embarrass a Labour Government. There could be no greater mistake. This question—the relation of the Labour Party and a Labour Government to the workers' daily struggle—has got to be faced and settled, for it will be the question of questions facing a Labour Government. It has got to be settled within the movement by the will of the organised workers themselves. It should be the main question facing the Labour Party Conference in June. On its settlement the whole future depends.

LET there be no mistake as to the position. The great majority of the Labour Movement is wholeheartedly united behind the decision to form a Labour Government. But there is not the same unity as to the policy to be pursued; and there is very great danger if that disunity is not brought out into the open to be cleared. Apart from general expressions of tendency there has been no responsible specific discussion of policy. Not only that, but there has even been a feeling that policy ought not to be discussed. It has been felt this is a matter which ought to be left to Mr. MacDonald and his friends and that any discussion might lead to disunity. This view is, in point of fact, the calculation of the enemy. As Mr. Churchill has stated, a Labour Government is to be encouraged "to continue in office on sufferance in order that, if they are violent, they may be defeated, and if they are moderate, they may become divided." Such a view could only be entertained by an outsider. There is no fear yet of the breaking up of the fundamental unity and solidarity of the British working-class movement, whatever individuals and tendencies may be shelved and thrown aside in the course of its growth. Discussion does not create the danger of disunity; there is too much common sense in the movement for that. What would create the danger of disunity would be the feeling that policy was being decided on in secret apart from the common gaze, and that Labour Ministers

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were acting mysteriously behind a veil without the closest daily contact with the masses whom it is their business to represent.

SUCH expression as has taken place upon the policy of a Labour Government has varied between the familiar poles of a maximum and a minimum programme. Whatever the character of the expression, they have all had this in common, that they have discussed the question in terms of legislative achievement. Yet any such discussion is far away from reality. There can be no legislative achievement of importance with a capitalist majority. Right and Left must and do recognise this equally, and here there is no dispute. The most that can be hoped is that the best possible within the limits set will be done to help the workers. That best possible will not be much, for however many pretty things may appear to be in common on the Liberal and Labour programmes, it will be another question when it comes to attempting to carry anything out, since any serious attempt will be dependent on finance, and finance cannot be tackled without more far-reaching measures than can be carried in the present Parliament. To discuss the situation, therefore, in terms of legislative achievement is to miss the mark. The real question is a question of administration. How and for whom will the Labour Government administer? How and for whom will they deal with affairs as they arise—strikes, police, wages, Empire, armaments, foreign issues, &c.? Will they stand by and for the working class first and foremost all the time, for the interests of the vast majority of the population, which are irreconcilably opposed to the interests of the possessing few? Or will they consider themselves the guardians and representatives of the capitalist State machine? Between these two alternatives there must in fact be a choice. Ominous statements have already appeared. The view of the Right Wing, expressed by Messrs. Webb and Thomas, has been declared that the object of forming a Labour Government is "simply and solely to give constitutional effect to the duty of carrying on the King's Government." That is at any rate a frank statement. Equally definite views have been expressed by the Left Wing that the object shall be to fight for the workers. Which is it to be? Let there not be any conscious self-deception of trying to hide behind idyllic statements that there

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ought not to be any conflict between the two. As soon as a practical issue arises, such as a strike or a war, that abstract harmony is blown sky high, and there has to be definite choice, decision, alignment. Let the Labour Movement take its decision consciously and not drift in a fog to another 1914.

ANY consideration of the policy of a Labour Government must take into account the policy of the bourgeoisie. It must never be forgotten that the present Labour Government is entering into office by the will and the decision of the bourgeoisie. The controversy which has been going on and still continues within the ranks of the bourgeoisie is tremendous. Heavy forces are in favour of opposition to any form of a Labour administration and of immediate open unification of the bourgeois ranks. But the major and more influential forces of bourgeois opinion are in favour of a Labour Government. "We would like Mr. MacDonald to stay in office for twelve months," says the *Observer*. "I do not share the apprehensions with which many people regard the possible advent of the Labour Party to power," pronounces Lord Inchcape. A Labour Government, declares *The Times*, would be "the least dangerous way out of the Parliamentary deadlock." "I regard the advent of a Labour Government," announces Lord Grey, "under these circumstances with no apprehension at all. Their foreign policy is the same as ours." "No Panic Now About Labour in Office," chortles the happy *Daily Herald* leader-writer. No doubt. But why? Why this general welcome to a Labour Government? It is not out of any love to it, or based on any concealment of the aim of defeating it. These spokesmen openly proclaim their ultimate aim of bourgeois coalition with no less certainty than their opponents. Only they believe that the tactical ground they have chosen is more favourable.

WHAT is the calculation of the bourgeoisie? It is a very simple one. On the one hand they know that the approaching situation at home and abroad is of such confusion and menace as easily to bring discredit on any Government. On the other hand they know that the Labour Government will be

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tied from taking any effective action by the capitalist majority. There could not be a simpler or safer device for the handing over of responsibility for difficult problems and decisions, combined with the bringing of discredit on the Labour Party. Abroad the situation is heading straight for a crisis. " It seems to me," declares Lord Grey in the same speech in which he expressed his equanimity at the approach of a Labour Government, " that Europe is drifting towards eventual catastrophe. . . . We are now travelling on the old road on which Europe travelled before the last great war." Against French hegemony in Europe British national prestige is to be reasserted by a " vigorous " foreign policy. It is a ticklish job, but what more suitable instrument through which to effect it than a Labour Government, just as before the war it was the then Radical leader Lloyd George that was used with the Mansion House speech to proclaim the anti-German policy ? Has not *The Times* proclaimed repeatedly the national policy in foreign affairs which the Labour Party will be expected to pursue ? Has not the former war editor of *The Times*, Mr. Wickham Steed, acclaimed Mr. MacDonald as " almost Conservative " in foreign policy ? At home the situation is similar. There is a prospect of a financial deficit, according to the Treasury experts. What more suitable condition for a Labour Government, whose hands will be tied over the Capital Levy, and which has promised reduced taxes and sweeping social reforms ? Most important of all : there is every prospect of a revival of working-class struggle in the spring. The miners, the railwaymen, the dockers, the builders, all have approaching disputes. It would be no easy matter for a bourgeois Government to deal with them effectively in the face of a growing and powerful Labour Opposition. But what more suitable instrument than to deal with them through a Labour Government, which shall be spurred under the cry of democracy and public order into performing the rôle of a Briand or an Ebert, while bringing discomfiture into the workers' own ranks?

IT is a simple trap, and yet it would be false to say that there is no danger of the Labour Party falling into it. Our present Labour statesmen have not yet learnt to be impervious to the clamour and suggestions of capitalist influences and to look only to the working class for their approval. There is every sign of a

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" vigorous " national policy. " We cannot be disregarded," declares Mr. MacDonald. "Our interests will not allow us to be disregarded." The Government, proclaims Mr. Tom Shaw, prospective Foreign Under Secretary, is failing to " maintain the prestige of our country. I am surprised that true Britons on the Conservative benches—and I trust we are all true Britons—should lie down without saying a word under that sort of treatment." " By some means," observes the *Manchester Guardian*, underlining the point, " Mr. MacDonald has to convince both M. Poincaré and the German Government that he will not shrink, if pressed far enough, from direct assistance to Germany in resisting violence "—a plain hint of possible alliance with Germany in war with France. And Mr. Scott Duckers announces (quoted without contradiction in the principal news space of *The Times*) that the official foreign policy of the Labour Party will consist of " the fullest possible reparations from Germany, a powerful navy, a well-paid and efficient army, and (failing a more satisfactory understanding with France) a largely increased air force." Suitably along with this goes a patriotic " national " policy at home. The hypocritical cry for "non-party" methods, pressed by the bourgeois organs, is actually taken up. "Let Mr. MacDonald," declares the *Observer*, " call a six months' truce to ordinary strife and controversy." And two days later Mr. MacDonald proclaims, " This House cannot afford merely to pursue old-fashioned partisan tactics," while Mr. Clynes calls for " non-party " treatment of great Imperial questions. With such lines of policy a strike becomes at once a regrettable outbreak of the undisciplined workers, which it is the first business of a Labour Government to smother or suppress.

THEREFORE the issue raised by the railway strike is of very immediate importance. For it raises the whole question of the relation of the Labour Government to the working class. The whole calculation of the bourgeoisie is by mingled suggestion, intimidation, adulation, cajolery, and tactics to drive the Labour Government into a position of national patriotism and opposition to the working class and so smash the movement. This sinister scheme has got to be smashed, and there is only one way of smashing it. That way is for the Labour Government to proclaim itself and act as the weapon of the working class against the bourgeoisie, and

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not the buffer of the bourgeoisie against the working class. The sooner the Labour Government does that, the better and the clearer and the healthier it will be for all concerned. Only thus can the working-class movement go forward as a united force. It will mean a revolution in outlook. It will mean regarding the question of Germany not as an arithmetic in reparations, nor as a basis for Anglo-American financial exploitation to defeat the Franco-German industrial combination, but as questions first and foremost of the German workers and the restoration of the eight-hour day and their rights of combination. It will mean regarding a strike, not as an exasperating inconvenience to the functions of a statesman, but as part of the same struggle in which the Labour Government is itself engaged. Such an outlook may not mean an immediate parliamentary advantage, but it will mean something bigger. For the Government which first sheds the cant of national prestige and the higher interests of the community, and stands openly by the masses of the population in their daily struggle, will earn its reward. Let the Labour Government stand by the workers, and the workers will stand by it.

R. P. D

N. LENIN

The report of Lenin's death reaches us after this issue of THE LABOUR MONTHLY *has been passed for press, and, accordingly, too late for us to deal adequately with this news, even were publication delayed for several days.*

We shall publish a special Memoir in our March number.

Editor, THE LABOUR MONTHLY

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AN IMMEDIATE INDUSTRIAL CHARTER

By GEORGE HICKS

(In pursuance of the article, "Towards a New Policy," by Mr. W. H. Hutchinson, of the Amalgamated Engineering Union and of the Labour Party Executive, in our last issue, we are glad to print this month a contribution to the discussion from Mr. George Hicks, of the Amalgamated Union of Building Trade Workers and of the General Council of the Trades Union Congress. We hope to print further contributions to this important symposium in future issues.— Editor, THE LABOUR MONTHLY.)

AN industrial programme which is to secure united working-class support must be one calculated to win through. Otherwise it would save time and loss of energy not to pretend, or ourselves believe, that revolution is anything else than, in its first consequences, destructive. On the other hand, if we are genuinely convinced that working-class revolt is possible on lines that, owing to scientific preparation, swiftly and, with the minimum of friction, substitute for the capitalist system one of proletarian industry, then, it seems to me, there is great danger in a policy of merely spragging the spokes of the capitalist wheel. There is much talk in certain directions at the present time about action regardless of consequences. The argument is that it is good *per se* to break capitalism ; that capitalist chaos is a capitalist concern and no concern of ours. Which may be sound revolutionary argument, but it is not sound industrial policy short of actual revolution.

Why do we not propose as a programme to be adopted by trades councils up and down the country that wages shall be increased and hours reduced so that all rent, interest, and profit shall be absorbed ? Because we know that we should be asking for something which capitalism cannot grant and yet live, and that if we

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could enforce it there would be no need of a programme. My point is that our industrial programme must be one envisaged within the practical framework of the capitalist system unless we are out to trade upon the ingenuousness of the average worker. Our preletarian brother may be simple, but if he is led to expect for his class-unionism more out of capitalism than capitalism is worth he will not view the collapse of the system with philosophic resignation. Our friend is likely to turn round and be nasty rather than share our rejoicings at the collapse of capitalism. So we might as well be honest and preach unadulterated revolution—if we mean it !

What absurdity it is to imagine that there is any direct connection, by way of scientific preparation, between wages and the creation of a socialist republic ! The only connection is the indirect one that exists between leisure plus proper sustenance and the possibility of a good mental standard. It is not so crudely true that the more the workers get the less there is left for the capitalists, and even were it true as a sum in simple proportion, Socialism would yet remain something bigger than a process of " spoiling the Egyptians." I suggest that an industrial programme considered as a series of palliatives can be made a valuable auxiliary to the revolutionary movement, but it is not the revolution, even in embryo. Palliatives are supposed to palliate. Our demands must be regulated by what is possible or we become impossiblist.

Obviously, the idea of an uninterrupted crescendo of hours' reductions and wage increases is impossiblist for the reason that capitalism not only would not but also could not stand anything of the kind. " So much the worse for capitalism ! " Alas, if with that we could only say, " So much the better for constructive revolution " ! It is true that every increase in scientific knowledge applied to industry adds to wealth-producing capacity in the benefits of which the workers should increasingly share, but it requires only the ordinary socialist's acquaintance with the economics of capitalist imperialism to know that its chief characteristic is a complete incapacity to socialise any such advantage. Consider the fact that within the last century the actual productive power of machinery has added to the wealth-potentialities per head of the working population at least one hundred times. Does anyone

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think it possible by any amount of direct action to add to the consuming-power of our class even one hundred *per cent.* let alone ten thousand? It is a commonplace of our propaganda that a standard of life equal, say, to ten pounds a week per family at present prices would be ridiculously easy of accomplishment, given the co-operative organisation of industry. But only an ignoramus would talk about squeezing any such standard out of the capitalist. There is, indeed, a limited amount of juice in the capitalist orange, and, to vary the metaphor, it is not a particularly revolutionary process to try to get blood out of a stone.

To get down to what in rhyming slang are called "brass tacks," articles of intellectual ironmongery of which we have to take practical account: Suppose the trades councils agree to formulate a programme of industrial demands and to back it up by the threat of industrial action. This programme embodies, let us say, the six-hour day and a minimum wage of four pounds a week; a moderate sample of the Communist body of palliatives. No industry, subject to foreign competition, could grant any such demand and continue to exist. Many industries not subject or little subject to foreign competition return in profits only that percentage upon the average which compensates the capitalist for the natural risks of the industry according to the principles upon which the capitalist system is run. It must not be forgotten that surplus-value is distributed amongst a big band of robbers, the last and often biggest of which would remain out of reach long after smaller men had made the acquaintance of the bankruptcy court. As H. H. Champion once said: "If the capitalist system were represented by one person, one would have no compunction about cutting its throat."

These considerations apply to mining and engineering. They also apply to building, which is not at the mercy of the lowest-paid labour abroad. Wages in certain towns were 2s. 4d. an hour for craftsmen when the Government cost-of-living index figure was 170. Is it conceivable that wages in these trades could possibly have remained at the rate quoted with a reduction of ninety to 100 in the index if we grant, as we must, some approximate relation to real prices in the latter, however unscientific might be the compilation of this index figure? The building trades, if it

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had had the power to resist decreases and had successfully resisted them, would have brought the greater part of the building industry practically to a standstill. It is impossible under capitalism to get far away from the Marxian law of wages, and every Socialist ought to be aware of the fact that it is impossible. But it is quite possible to maintain a position asserting the claim of the worker to conditions equal to the best which the industry, can, in capitalist parlance, "afford," and resist encroachments upon that standard, whatever it may be. But, clearly, the standard must vary industry by industry and can be determined by industrial power used only as a testing instrument. It is a different matter when we talk in national terms. A national programme must be a minimum programme, based upon what capitalist industry *as a whole* can actually "afford" and what is realisable.

From the standpoint, therefore, that industrial action, unless it is undertaken with the definite object of overturning the present system frankly as a revolutionary act, must be remedial as a basis of a cultural and efficient class structure, let us examine its possibilities within the society that we find extremely complex and sensitive. I assert as my profound conviction that one thing or the other must be done; either boldly to proclaim revolutionary intention or use the power of trade unionism to make the best of the present system whilst our class are being educated in revolutionary principles. I am convinced that any attempt to trick the workers into an economic stalemate by throwing the weight of industrial machinery over to the side of impossiblist demands merely to harass the capitalist class will not bring the revolution nearer, but will merely recoil upon the heads of too clever people with disastrous results.

In the first place I believe we shall be on sure ground if we take up the position that no industry or section of an industry has any right to exist, or, if an essential one, any right to remain in competitive hands, unless it can assure the workers employed in its ranks food and leisure sufficient for health of body and development of mind. Industry as at present organised can be made to guarantee a minimum such as this without economic dislocation for the reason that a measure of improvement in social life is within the power of the system to establish now, and the stabilisation of demand that would follow, together with further

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evolution in the means of production, would create conditions later on for another advance and yet another. My conclusion may be questioned. It may be argued, on classic lines, that the position of the working class must go from bad to worse as long as capitalism lasts. Very well, if such is the case, be honest enough to stand for the real thing. Do not ask for wages to go up if you believe they must go down. Concentrate on smashing the wage system, not on lines of trade union defence, but on those of class-conscious defiance.

We ought to demand, therefore, minimum wages and maximum hours within the range of reasonable possibility of accomplishment, or nothing of the kind. We cannot run with the hare and at the same time hunt with the hounds. The class war now is a question of steady and controlled pressure upon the elastic rind of capitalism ; it is conditioned by the natural " give " possessed by the material upon which the workers operate in that struggle. Some day we shall use an appropriate instrument to penetrate to the inside. We have fought for the eight-hour day and have not yet achieved it universally. Some industries have obtained the forty-four-hour week. At the present stage of trade union development I believe it to be futile to go for any scale of hours less than the forty-four. I believe this to be commercially practical and, therefore, with adequate organisation, capable of achievement. I do not apologise for studying commercial practicability. As a trade union official I am forced to live in a real world. Let us frame our charter. Capitalism, I am convinced, with scientific advantage to itself (which is the test : no general strike, sabotage, or any other " direct action " making the slightest difference), can adapt itself to forty-four hours together with wages equal to pre-war plus the increased cost of living with an additional increase of 25 per cent. The adaptation required under competitive conditions implies increased efficiency. There is no bottomless profit and there are no vast reserves well enough within reach to finance any kind of project we might think heroic. It follows that—more efficient organisation of capitalist machinery bearing an immediate relation to the unemployment margin—our proposals must be coupled with a policy of " work or adequate maintenance," and to this latter policy the Labour Movement to-day is to all intents and purposes pledged.

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So far our charter covers hours, wages, and employment—food, clothing, leisure, and security up to a point well above the average of the workers' lot now. It remains to add the one measure which is necessary to approach the elements of a tolerable existence—housing. As I have proved on numberless occasions in the press and on platforms throughout the country, a guaranteed programme of 200,000 houses a year for the next twenty-five years is the very least required to overcome the accumulated shortage of the last fourteen or fifteen years, and the workers' self-respect should be equal to insisting upon houses substantially better than those contemplated to-day by even the most progressive authorities. I submit the above programme for discussion and I believe it will commend itself to the workers and their representatives with only those reactionary exceptions which we have learned through disappointing experience to expect. I believe the trades councils will rally to such a charter and demand adequate representation in national councils for its promulgation.

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THE LABOUR PARTY AND POWER[1]

I.—Some Continental Comparisons

By M. PHILIPS PRICE

THE entirely new situation created by the political and parliamentary stalemate between the three parties in England is certainly without parallel in the history of this country. Of course it is possible to find apparently similar situations which arose during the latter half of last century, when the Irish Nationalists held the balance between the Liberals and the Unionists. But in those days the issues concerned the struggle for the spoils of office of two parties, representing the big propertied interests of England, in which struggle the smaller propertied interests, the native Irish landlords and traders, levied blackmail on both sides, owing to the stalemate in Parliament. To-day there are the same two parties in England competing for control of the machinery of State, but the former third party has vanished and its place has been taken by the party which expresses the political aspirations of the class-conscious hand and head workers and of a section of the small middle classes. Thus while the parliamentary situation has many similarities to that which faced some of the Liberal and Conservative Cabinets of the 'eighties and 'nineties of last century, the underlying social forces creating this situation are as different as chalk from cheese. For the first time the issues are not between groups within the capitalist class, but between these groups, still carrying on a desultory fight against each other in their own sectional interests, and the new class party of the workers, coming up from below. That is the real novelty of the present position. It is even more important than the fact that we have a parliamentary stalemate and that the workings of the party system in the House of Commons will probably undergo considerable modification in the near future, as Ramsay MacDonald suggests in a recent number of the *New Leader*. The present balance of political power, represented by the parliamentary

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strength of the parties, indicates a new alignment of class forces and the weakening of the hold of the two great capitalist parties in the country over the parliamentary machine.

On the other hand, it is entirely wrong to imagine that what has happened here is without precedent in Europe. Parliamentary stalemate and the placing of a party representing organised Labour in such a position that it can take power only with support of a section of the capitalist class may be new to England. But it is certainly not new to some countries on the Continent, where the breakdown of the capitalist system has gone much further than here. If the situation at present in England is without precedent, that is rather a proof that capitalism here has only now reached a stage of decline which it reached much earlier elsewhere. It is, therefore, very important for us to know what have been the effects, as far as the interests of the working classes and the Labour and Socialist cause are concerned, of these situations of parliamentary stalemate in other countries. What experiences have other Labour and Socialist parties had on the Continent, how have they ordered their tactics, and what has been the result? Have we anything to learn either by way of imitating a success or of taking warning from a failure?

One's mind naturally turns first to Russia, where the breakdown of the capitalist system took place at a very early stage and progressed catastrophically in a very short period of time. But the comparison between the position in England now and the position in Russia between the March and the November revolutions in 1917 presents some difficulties. In Russia the old Government had for generations been a Government of an agrarian aristocracy, which was hindering the normal development of capitalist production, restricting the political rights of the bourgeoisie, and hence had never permitted the growth of the parliamentary system, which is the most perfect political expression of capitalism. Even though there was no parliamentary system in Russia at the time when the Russian bourgeoisie proved itself incapable of taking up the reins of government, which were let fall by the agrarian aristocracy of Tsardom, nevertheless a position of stalemate was created during the summer of 1917 which bears some similarity with that facing the Labour Party to-day. The leaders of the Russian Social-

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Democracy, the Mensheviks, were faced with the alternatives of carrying on the government of the country alone or of entering into an agreement with the parties of the Russian bourgeoisie, who were really by this time the advanced guards of Anglo-Franco-Belgian finance capital in Russia. I well remember the solemn pledges, given before the crowded audiences of the Petrograd Soviet by the Menshevik leaders in May, 1917, that they would secure, as a price for entering the Provisional Government with the Cadets and the party of the Moscow industrialists, State control over the banks and key industries of Russia, the liquidation of the great estates, and a declaration from the Allies of the precise objects for which they were prosecuting the war. I believe that the Menshevik leaders honestly tried to do their best to attain these ends in the Government of Kerensky, but they met with well-organised and effective obstruction from the Cadet and other bourgeois parties. Instead of leaving the coalition and forcing the bourgeois parties either to rule by a dictatorship or hand them the reins of power and rule by a minority relying on the broad masses, they stuck to their coalition. This was one of the factors which made the second or November revolution inevitable. A Socialist party here had set itself aims, found itself faced by class opposition, and instead of using its strategic position as leader of a class which was aspiring to power, it whittled away its programme on the excuse that Russia must be saved from anarchy. Even worse was the rôle played by the Mensheviks after the November revolution in the areas where the revolution did not or was not allowed by various causes to spread. In the Ukraine their local groups entered into coalition with Nationalist parties; in the Volga provinces at the Ufa conference with the Socialist-Revolutionaries, Cadets, and Czecho-Slovaks. These coalitions merely prepared the way for the military dictatorship of the Prussian generals in the first case and of Koltchak in the second.

A much closer parallel, however, to the situation which is coming in England to-day is to be seen in Germany since the war. Here we have had Governments ruling on parliamentary majorities and a balance of parties in the Reichstag which in their main outlines are not very different from the circumstances prevailing now in Westminster. Here also we have a Social-Democratic Party, which

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has been called upon to play the most important rôle in the events of the last four years. Let us see how the Social-Democratic Party of Germany has used the opportunities given to it. In the elections for the National Assembly at Weimar, when its power was at its highest, it was not able to form a Government without the support of the Democrats, *i.e.*, representatives of trading and bank capital and the *Zentrum*, containing big Catholic, agrarian, and industrial interests. The German Social-Democratic leaders used the absence of a sufficient parliamentary majority for their party and the growing economic anarchy as an excuse for abandoning the most important part of their social programme, which alone would have made a beginning in stopping the anarchy in the method of production and distribution. By going into coalition with the Democrats and *Zentrum*, they had to abandon the nationalisation of mines and bank control. For this they got as a *quid pro quo* a republican constitution with a democratic administration in the State. As a matter of fact this existed only on paper, since recent events have shown that by Article 48 of the constitution a military dictatorship can be set up in Germany whenever the President of the Republic (in this case the trust magnates) thinks it necessary. The Social-Democrats have thus abandoned an economic key position, the public control of industry, and have got in exchange a purely worthless political constitution, which the present holders of the economic key position (the trusts) can turn round their fingers' ends.

Again, when the general election in June, 1920, showed that many people in Germany, who had eighteen months before voted Socialist, now voted, largely through disillusionment, for capitalist parties, and the Social-Democratic Party was returned with a smaller number of members to the new Reichstag, the leaders continued the same tactics. Dependent now on votes, not only from the Democrats and *Zentrum*, but also from the heavy industry Peoples' Party to form a Government, they were faced with the necessity either of entering the so-called Grand Coalition, which implied the abandonment of the eight-hour day, the Workmen's Council Act, and other last remnants of the November revolution, or of forming a united front with the Communists and initiating a big campaign both inside and outside of Parliament for winning

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the support of the broad masses for the pure and unadulterated programme of the old Social-Democratic Party. They chose the former alternative on the grounds that only the participation of the Social-Democrats would secure a more sympathetic treatment of Germany by Poincaré, would prevent a capitulation on the Ruhr, and would restore the finances of the country. At the end of the days of the Grand Coalition the trust magnates had beaten down the German workers' wages to one-quarter of their pre-war gold value and had established the nine and ten-hour day in factories and eight in mines, while the mark was no longer quoted on the foreign exchanges. Moreover, the trusts now saw to it that the Social-Democrats bore the odium of the capitulation on the Ruhr—a capitulation which they (the trusts) had been secretly preparing for months. Then when the Moor had done his duty, the German trusts decided to set up their own military dictators. They reduced Parliament to a club, where any member of the once-powerful legislature who is not under preventive arrest in the terror now reigning in Germany can have a cup of tea and a smoke. But even then the Social-Democratic leaders had their chance. When the Enabling Bill was before the Reichstag in December last they might have brought the Government down by their hostile vote and have forced a general election on that issue. They voted for the Enabling Bill to escape a general election at which they feared the electorate might treat them even worse than in June, 1920, for their sins since that date. Thus the dictatorship of General von Seeckt became legal, and the Social-Democratic leaders now have to face a general election under the shadow of his sabre.

It may be said that in England to-day we are not faced with the alternative of coalition with the Liberals or remaining out of office, and that we will not fall into the trap as the Social-Democratic leaders have done. Nevertheless, as we take power now we are dependent on Liberal votes and will have to modify our programme accordingly. This need not necessarily be fatal to us. *It all depends on what we get in return for our temporary postponement of the capital levy.* We shall get the sole control over the administrative machine of the State. This is certainly a big asset and something more than the German Social-Democrats got, for they have always had to share that control with other parties of the coalitions. By sole

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control we can do much to relieve the lot of the unemployed and initiate public works. But where shall we get the money from? The whole problem of the present trade depression and of unemployment is part of the general economic problem which no previous Government has been able to solve, not because its leaders have been incompetent, but because, standing for a declining economic system, they have been unable to take those steps which would undermine the economic bases of those who put them in their positions. The capital levy is ruled out for the time being. There is only one other means by which we can finance our schemes for unemployment. We can increase Ways and Means advances, we can float reconstruction loans and pay a good rate of interest to those who refuse to let us levy their capital, and, lastly, we can print Treasury notes. In other words, we can tread the thorny path of inflation. We could do, in fact, exactly what the industrial and trading magnates behind the Liberal Party would like us to do in their interests. They, and also the industrial group of the Conservatives, would like someone to come along and artificially raise the value of real estate and liquid assets, and depreciate the value of fixed interest-bearing securities which hang like a millstone round the neck of the country and are one of the main causes of the great trade depression. Industry might get busy again for a time, till the public began to see what was going on, and then a general flight from the pound would begin and a financial catastrophe like that which has come in Germany. If the Liberals could induce us to do this, their speculators would rake in the cash, while we should rake in the curses of all those small middle-class people and artisans who have invested their savings in housing bonds, war loan, and Co-operative banks. They are with us now—or a larger part of them are—but after this they would either turn to the Tories or, as on the Continent in countries where inflation has been rampant, become the rank and file recruits of a Fascist Movement. These are prospects that await us if we try to finance over a period of years our social schemes by inflation. We should abandon our economic key position—the capital levy—and, I may add, a measure closely associated with it, the control of the banks, and we should enter into a secret, almost unconscious coalition with the Liberals, just as the German Social-Democratic leaders entered with their

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eyes open into a conscious coalition with the Democrats, and finally with the party of Herr Stinnes. But the ruin of the Socialist Movement in Germany at the present time is a terrible warning to us.

I submit, therefore, that we must not abandon our economic key position—the capital levy—for the Liberal phantom of inflation, as the German Social-Democrats abandoned their nationalisation schemes for the phantom of the Weimar constitution, which changed its form to a military dictatorship. We must use the administrative apparatus of the State in order to show that a Socialist party can and will set that apparatus in motion to replace the activities of private enterprise, which is now so obviously on its decline. Having done this, and having made the acquisition of purchasing power by the State a necessity for the purpose of financing our public works schemes, it will then be absolutely necessary to appeal to the electorate on the issue created by ourselves—capital levy and control of banks, or inflation. Then we shall not have abandoned any economic key position, but shall merely have used the present stalemate in Parliament as an opportunity for a breathing space, during which we can prepare the ground for the big fight of the future over the control of the great production and exchange monopolies of this country.

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THE FUTURE OF THE TRADES COUNCILS CONFERENCE

By R. PALME DUTT

SO far there has been no public discussion in the Labour Press of the results of the Trades Councils Conference which was held at Birmingham just before the Election.

This is a pity, as, whatever our view with regard to it, there can be no question of the importance of the Trades Councils Conference as the only national meeting of the rank and file working-class forces in the country.

The omission on the part of the official Labour Press is easily comprehensible. The policy of the headquarters machine was clearly, if impudently, expressed in the paragraph sent out by the *Labour Press Service* with reference to the Conference :—

> There has recently been a flood of resolutions in this sense received at Congress headquarters from local trades councils and branches of trade unions, but the General Council, of course, takes no cognisance of resolutions coming from these channels.

When bourgeois influence in a working-class movement is strong, the distinction between "official" and "unofficial" becomes strong. Anything not inspired by the machine, anything coming from the local workers on the spot, anything emanating from the working class themselves, is taboo. It is an accident to be hushed up. If weak, it is sneered at ; if strong, it causes panic. It cannot be welcomed as a spontaneous expression of the working class, because, however harmless and dutiful it may appear (and direct working-class expression is, of course, very seldom harmless and dutiful in manner, and very often strong and rude), there is no telling where it may not lead. An official group which is following bourgeois policy is afraid of all direct expressions of the working class: " . . . . local trades councils and branches of trade unions . . . . the General Council, of course, takes no cognisance of resolutions coming from these channels."

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So develops a complete divorce between what is done and discussed in the working-class movement, and what is allowed to appear in the official Labour Press. The winds of controversy are stayed, or (since there is a clamour for some outlet) hitched on to some suitable kite such as the exact degree of yellowness of Mr. Blatchford. The official group live their sheltered, if suspicious, lives in an apparent monotony of unity—until the curtain is suddenly drawn aside by some such scene as the Plymouth Congress. And to the militant workers, " unofficial " and " rank and file " become the hall-marks of all virtue, and it is felt hard to believe that any official can enter the kingdom of heaven.

It is against this background in actual fact that the Trades Councils Conference must be considered. If the Trades Councils Conference were simply a meeting of certain minor organs of the movement that had happened never to have had a meeting before, no one would care twopence one way or another. But it is because the Trades Councils Conference is a potential *expression* of the workers themselves, something direct from the workers on the spot and created by the workers themselves, an integral part of the movement and yet not controllable by the machine, that all the excitement arises. Here the unfettered expression of the workers may break out. That is the fear. That is the hope.

To all who are seeking to overcome the distinction of " official " and " unofficial," and substitute the single test and character of " working class," the Trades Councils Conference is of supreme importance. For the Trades Councils undeniably are integral parts of the movement, and yet their Conference is not easily to be absorbed or dominated from above. Indeed, it looks as if the machine has decided that such a course is hopeless to attempt, and that the only policy is to endeavour to trample out the Conference as having no right to exist. Yet the Conference has no " unconstitutional," sectional, exclusive character. It is open to all—all who take their part in the local movement. Indeed if any official should wish to come out as a left-wing leader he could not do better than come off his pedestal and win approval by taking up his share of local work and coming to the Trades Councils Conference on a footing of equality. The Conference lays no challenge to the sovereign bodies of the movement or claim to legislative or other

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rights. It is simply a meeting place, a discussion ground, an expression of the local movements directly representing the workers all over the country.

Now if this is true, then this is the basis from which the Conference and its future must be judged. Its one single, definite value is as an *expression* of the ordinary workers. According as it is expressing the views, feelings, and desires of the workers on the spot it is succeeding or failing. It is from this point of view we need to discuss the proceedings of the last Conference and to draw any conclusions for the future.

There is at present no genuine opportunity of common expression of the working class in this country. The Trades Union Congress and Labour Party Conference are unable to fulfil this rôle. They are not representative in character (in the Labour Party the local movements are represented only by a tiny fraction of the votes, totalling less than a single big union, and in the Trades Union Congress they are wholly excluded); they are mainly manned by paid officials; they are machine-ridden in agenda and they make no attempt to discuss the principal problems facing the working class.

The Plymouth Trades Union Congress has recently given rise to an outcry against it as a scandalous fiasco. Yet the most significant features of the Plymouth Congress were not so much the sensational revelations which have had so much publicity as the more humdrum features common to it and all Trades Union Congresses. There has been much objection to the washing of dirty linen at the Congress. Yet on the whole the Congress is just the place where dirty linen should be washed—provided it is washed, and not just brought out in public for the purpose of scoring personal points and then put back again exactly where it was in order to stop the scandal. But the real crime of the Plymouth Congress was the utter indifference to and neglect of all the big questions facing the working class—unemployment, the attack on wages, the international position, working class disunity—and the confinement to passing a few mechanical resolutions with no serious discussion or practical intent. All the serious subjects were disposed of with fifteen-minute discussions and general inattention. All the strong feeling, all the passion and hot controversy, was reserved by these

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representatives of the workers for their own dirty little jobs and posts. To the big issues facing the working class there was indifference and tepid, pious platitudes. That is the real dirt of the Plymouth Congress which nothing can wash.

Did the Plymouth Trades Union Congress represent the workers? There can be only one answer to that question. It did not represent the workers, but the workers' officials. Even an observant bourgeois reporter, such as the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent, could not fail to discern this point in fact, even though he was unable to analyse its meaning.

> "Jealousy of a supreme central authority," wrote the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent at Plymouth, "might not be inconsistent with harmonious relations between the different unions. Of that harmony, to judge from yesterday's proceedings, one might say there was very little. Yet the frequency of the sympathetic strike and the almost invariable refusal of trade unionists to do anything which might be called 'blackleg' labour or to handle 'blackleg' goods show that it exists."

The reporter sees the two apparently inconsistent sets of facts: he does not see that they refer to two sets of people.

In the council chamber, certain well-paid officials wrangling and brawling over jobs, poaching, and relative powers. In the docks and the yards men sacrificing their day's wages that may be all the earnings of a week to stand by their fellows.

It is two worlds, no less than the bourgeoisie and the proletariat represent two worlds. And the first world is represented at the Trades Union Congress. The second world has not yet its expression.

The second world exists: it is only its expression that is lacking. That is the dominating fact, which gives the key to the note of the Trades Councils Conference. It is often said that whatever criticism may be lodged against the conventional official elements, they are in reality only representative of the rank and file. That statement is not true, and the whole history of the past few years demonstrates its falsehood.

The history of the past few years for the British working class has been a history of worsening conditions on the one hand, and on the other of a revolt that has been smothered and suppressed. The record of the years immediately after the war is familiar and

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their lesson is known. But the events of the past eighteen months, and in particular of the last spring and summer, and likely to arise again this spring, have a significance that has not been widely recognised. That significance is the re-arising of the spirit of revolt after the capitalist victory in the face of official indifference and antagonism that has refused to give it expression. Every evidence that can be traced, every sign and measure that can be recorded, has revealed a real growing mass spirit of fight and resistance against the successes of the capitalist offensive, which has been repeatedly blocked and choked by the barriers of the machine.

One ballot after another, one strike after another, reveals the workers united, determined, tenacious; their representatives hesitating, surrendering, and in opposition to them.

The silent testimony of the strike ballots, almost the sole measurable evidence of mass feeling, affords an extraordinary feature during the past eighteen months. There has hardly been a ballot that has not declared for action, for resistance, for fighting. There has hardly been a ballot that has not been disregarded.

The picture revealed by strikes is no less demonstrative. During the period in question there has taken place such a wave of strikes as has won recognition from the bourgeoisie as an "industrial crisis" of first-class magnitude. Yet throughout this "industrial crisis" there has hardly been a single official national dispute other than the Boilermakers'. It has consisted almost entirely of unofficial, local sporadic struggles, carried on at best with the passive approval of the National Union, and often in the face of active Union opposition. We find men striking and ordered back by the Union; we find men striking and fined by the Union for doing so; we find men striking and subjected to a joint battery by Union officials and the Press of censure and reproach.

Alongside of this has taken place the steadily worsening conditions, the tremendous cuts in wages, the lengthening of hours, the overcrowding and evictions, the toll of unemployment, and the "gap," which have been the accompaniment of the Union paralysis and the operative cause of the rising spirit of revolt.

This sum total makes up the situation and gives the background to the Trades Councils Conference as the only national

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meeting of the workers without distinction of trade or industry and imparts to it its meaning.

First, the progressive degradation of the workers' conditions to an intolerable pitch.

Second, the growing spirit of revolt of the workers unable to find expression through the normal channels.

Third, the conspicuous failure of the official leadership to maintain even a semblance of efficiency, unity, or loyalty.

From this situation it is only a step to the inevitable conclusion —the necessity and task of a National Conference of Workers, such as at present only the Trades Councils Conference can supply. What is that task? It is to gather together the scattered and hesitating forces of the workers and face in a united way the problems that bear down upon them, to hammer out every question and show the common way forward, and to act together on the results that are reached as a united and uniting force, so helping to restore the confidence and conscious direction that has been lost from the movement.

Unless the Trades Councils Conference consciously sets itself to accomplish this task, its meeting will only be of technical interest, and the great task that awaits it will pass to other hands.

In the words of the chairman of the Conference :—

> This Conference has the opportunity to supply what is the greatest need of the movement, a rallying centre to gather up a common movement that will so increase in volume and strength as to compel a new leadership in the central organs of the movement, a facing of the problems of the working class, and unification of the working-class army.

And now to come to a question. Did the Birmingham Conference last November do this?

There is no need to be afraid of the answer, No. All institutions that have in them a real historical character and growth begin by being uncertain of themselves and hesitating to assert their full power. To compare great with small. The Russian Soviets were at first content to sound only a minor key to the Provisional Government. The British Parliament for long made no pretensions to more than the subordinate functions for which it was called. And so in its own way the Trades Councils Conference may begin with a limited view of its functions.

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But what is important is to recognise quite frankly and clearly at the outset what was accomplished and what was not accomplished and what mistakes were made that must be put right. This is the necessary condition of any progress.

Consider the position when the Birmingham Conference met. Two great events had brought to a head the whole general situation which has been described. The Dockers' Strike, with its heroic struggle by the men, the repudiation by the officials, and the disastrous breakaway, had suddenly thrown into high relief the menacing character of the whole position—the utter divorce of officials and men, the rising spirit of revolt, and the visible danger of passing into complete anarchy and break up of the movement through the lack of leadership. And the Plymouth Congress immediately after had suddenly displayed before the masses more vividly than ever before the pitiful bankruptcy and insignificance of those they were supposed to look to as their leaders.

The demand for something to be done was strong. The calling of the Trades Councils Conference immediately after the Congress evoked a tremendous response. In the conditions of poverty in which the mass of the Trades Councils have to work to-day, the successful holding of an unofficial Conference of over a hundred delegates, representing three-quarters of a million workers, was an amazing sign. On every side was the expectation of a lead.

And then what happened? The delegates who had come together with such difficulty from all over the country were occupied for perhaps five or six hours in all. They were occupied with an agenda which bristled with constitutional rules, amendments, affiliation fees, trade union structure, &c., &c. They were so busy with their "delete and insert" amendments, that when it came to such questions as Unemployment, Housing, Wages, and Hours, it was the fag end of the day and there was no time for discussion. Conventional resolutions were passed without discussion, and made no difference to anyone.

To the historian who will trouble to see in perspective the position of the working class at this moment, and who can know that many of those present were in fact among the most eager to forward the struggle of the working class, the picture will seem maddening in its futility.

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There were two great discussions which occupied the principal debating time of the Conference.

One discussion was a great spectral struggle between the principles of the One Big Union and Industrial Unionism.

It is necessary to see the actual propositions in order to realise the profound basis of this controversy between Inside Out and Outside In.

One eager group of contestants demanded " one union for all workers, departmentalised in order that the workers in each industry or trade may have proper expression."

The other and victorious group demanded " one union for each industry, all under the direction of a General Council."

This was the grand controversy that occupied these modern scholastics.

The second great controversy was on the interpretation of " social " working-class organisations which were to be admitted into the Trades Councils. Glasgow held that " social " organisations meant drink clubs and should be cut out. Tolerant England was up in arms on behalf of the " social " principle. The curious foreigner who might have imagined by the terms that a great Socialist controversy was under weigh would have had to be disabused.

These were the two principal discussions to crystallise the present position and problems of the working class.

Now what was responsible for this complete defeat of any real purpose of the Conference ?

Probably most delegates would agree that there were two things which might be singled out.

The first was the character of the agenda. The type of agenda which consists of a medley of cut and dried resolutions and amendments sent in by some specified date is wholly unsuitable for a big conference of the working class which is endeavouring to face living problems. With the best will in the world on the part of delegates, such an agenda stifles real discussion, and invariably produces long expenditure of time on niggling controversies in the early stages and a breakneck speed of Moved, Seconded, and Carried at the end, with no time for " mere talk " on general questions, *i.e.*, what matters. We have got to realise that this procedure

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belongs to the old traditions of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress, and is just part of that throttling machinery we are out to break. We need to break it entirely and not be afraid of adopting the "Continental" plan. What we need is careful discussion with reasonable time allocated on the big issues facing the workers, and then drawing up the results of the Conference (whether through commissions or otherwise) in a form that means something and bears some relation to future action, and not in pious resolutions which repeat what we all said years ago and never needed the expense, time, and worry of a Conference at all to reach.

That is the first point. But the second goes deeper, because it is something more than a question of procedure. It is a point that characterised, not only the procedure, but the majority of the resolutions themselves, and the discussion, and indeed the whole atmosphere, and that point is the obsession with questions of machinery and structure as the principal questions facing the working class. The giant controversy between the One Big Union and Industrial Unionism was simply an example of this tendency gone mad. Does anyone imagine that this is the issue before the working class to-day?

This characteristic has marked the left-wing movement during the present period, and is in danger even of isolating it from the mass of the ordinary workers and bringing them much nearer in practice to the right-wing officials, who are also preoccupied with questions of machinery when they reflect about trade unionism in general. Always it is a question of the Congress, the Councils, the relation of the Councils and the Congress, the General Council, the Affiliation of the Unemployed, Industrial Unionism, &c., &c. All these are very good—in their place—but they are not a substitute for living issues, and can even become dangerous if they are treated so.

What is the result in practice? Remember the burden of the complaint against the Plymouth Congress. All the time consumed on petty matters, and only a quarter of an hour for unemployment, a quarter of an hour for the international situation, &c., &c. And now what happened at the Birmingham Conference? All the time consumed on machinery questions, and no time left for the resolutions on unemployment, wages and hours, housing, &c. The

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parallel is too near to be pleasing. The danger of the practical approximation of the left and the right, suggested above, a way from the workers, cannot be treated as altogether fanciful.

The only lead given in the Conference was admittedly the chairman's speech: and a chairman's speech cannot do more than open up questions. Yet delegate after delegate complained that they had come looking for a lead and had found none save in the chairman's speech. This is not a satisfactory situation and must be remedied.

There is no inherent fault in the position compelling this result. The Trades Councils hold a vantage ground unique in the movement, and the men on them include many of the best, the keenest, and also of the most practical of the active workers. The hopes of the movement in Britain must be and are centred in them.

The Trades Councils must rise to their opportunities. The Trades Councils Conference should assume the position of the spokesmen of the masses of the workers, not in opposition to the Trades Union Congress, but as the complement of the official body in whose hands the power rests. It should stimulate the agitation of the Trades Councils and the workers as a whole apart from their sectional interests. We should look forward to the time when there may be a great yearly meeting, not only of the Trades Councils, but of all the foremost and class-conscious sections of the workers' movement. In the meantime the development to that stage is in the hands of the Trades Councils Conference and their Executive: and it is to be hoped that their Executive will lose no time in pushing matters forward and by the effectiveness of their preparations ensuring the unqualified success of next year's Conference as a representative conference of the workers discussing all questions that affect them.

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THE NEW TREND OF INDIAN NATIONALISM

BY MANABENDRA NATH ROY

THE outstanding feature of the Indian Nationalist Movement during the last half year has been a swing to the right. The programme of militant mass-action, inseparably involved in the Non-Co-operation campaign, has been definitely replaced by constitutionalism. Every tendency of a revolutionary nature has been repudiated. The leadership of the National Congress has passed over into the hands of the upper middle class, whose programme is not to boycott the Government, but to make the way clear for negotiations which will eventually lead to a compromise with Imperialism. The object of the Congress, under the new leadership of the Swaraj Party, has been declared frankly to be the realisation of Dominion status within the Empire. The pseudo-parliamentary institutions known as the Reform Councils, heretofore boycotted by the Non-Co-operators, have been proclaimed by the new leadership to be the most useful field for nationalist activities.

Last year, when the Congress was still controlled by the followers of Gandhi, the right wing, under the leadership of C. R. Das, brought forward the demand for the repudiation of the council boycott. In the Gaya Congress of December, 1922, this resolution was defeated. The right wing, which refused to abide by the Congress decision, constituted itself into a new party within the Congress, known as the Swaraj Party, and began to agitate for the removal of the ban upon the councils.

The new party was composed of the upper middle-class elements within the Congress, and therefore counted among its ranks some of the ablest and cleverest politicians in the Nationalist Movement. The orthodox Gandhists, on the other hand, had nothing concrete to offer which could give new impetus to the movement. They could only repeat the worn-out formulas which had been found miserably impotent in the field of practical politics. By roundly repudiating the militant action of the masses, the Gandhists

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had forfeited the confidence of the latter. The once-powerful Non-Co-operation Movement had become nothing but a dramatic show. Inactivity and disintegration characterised the movement at this period. Divorced from the masses, the Nationalist Movement had become once again a purely middle-class affair. Under such circumstances, it was but natural that those leaders who could give out a programme calculated to further the interests of the bourgeoisie should carry the Congress with them.

This is precisely what happened. After half a year of bitter recrimination, it was decided to call a special session of the National Congress at Delhi. This met in the middle of September and gave its verdict in favour of the Swaraj Party. The ban on the councils was raised, and the Congressmen were allowed to contest the coming general elections. This constituted a complete victory for the upper middle class, which is very closely connected economically and ideologically with the big capitalists and landlords, and signalised the defeat and demoralisation of the petty bourgeoisie which had led the Non-Co-operation Movement. The victory of the Swarajists was all the more decisive inasmuch as most of the outstanding figures of the Gandhist wing, which stood for the continuation of the council boycott, came to an open or tacit understanding with the right wing. Mohamed Ali, the chief lieutenant of Gandhi and leader of the Khilafat Movement, himself called upon the Congress to sanction the removal of the council boycott. He even intimated that he did so with the authority of Mr. Gandhi.

The Special Congress at Delhi marked a turning-point in the entire movement. The petty bourgeoisie, which did not find its own interests reflected in the new programme, could not agree with the new leaders, neither could it develop a programme of its own which might command a hearing in the Congress. Had the petty bourgeoisie been bold enough to revive the original Non-Co-operation Programme with full consciousness of its revolutionary significance, they might have re-captured the leadership of the Congress. That is to say, they could have held their own only if they had had courage enough to fall back upon the masses, in order to fight the right wing.

But this is too much to expect from the petty bourgeoisie.

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It, however, remains a fact that this element, dissatisfied with the Delhi decision, provides a fertile field for the propaganda of revolutionary nationalism.

The two months following upon the Delhi Congress were marked by the election campaign for the new Reform Councils, this campaign being the only sign of nationalist activity. In view of the fact that the six million people constituting the Indian electorate, out of a population of three hundred and twenty million, belong to the propertied upper classes, rich intellectuals, and peasant-proprietors closely related to the landlords, those seeking election could not but commit themselves unequivocally to the defence of the interests of these elements. Therefore, the election campaign has brought out clearly the true nature of the Swaraj Party, which to-day controls the leadership of the National Congress.

Cleared of all the froth and foam of sentimentality with which Mr. C. R. Das originally clothed it, the programme of the Swaraj Party (and therefore of the Congress) has for its main planks : (1) Dominion status; (2) Parliamentary opposition, with a view to forcing the Government to negotiate with the " representatives " of the nation; (3) Protection of private property and development of native capitalism; (4) Defence of the landed aristocracy; (5) Protection of the Native States; (6) Decentralised government.

The methods proposed for the realisation of this programme are eminently bourgeois. Constitutional opposition has become the main pivot of the movement. The plan is to capture a majority of the elective seats, then to bring in a resolution on Self-Government. If the Government rejects the resolution, a policy of obstruction will be adopted to make government through the councils impossible. This all sounds quite plausible until we examine the facts. First, the Swaraj Party, though scoring notable victories in the elections just terminated, have failed to capture more than about a third of the seats. The conquest of a majority, upon which hangs the success of the entire plan, will be possible only when the bourgeoisie as a class stands solidly behind the Congress, that is, when the Congress has become quite frankly the representative of the upper classes. Secondly, a parliamentary majority, even when secured, will be of no avail unless the Congress is ready with a plan of extra-parliamentary action at the time when,

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as is inevitable, its resolution is rejected. The two cannot go together because extra-parliamentary action implies a revolutionary movement based on the masses—a movement which will not be tolerated by the bourgeoisie. Therefore, the logical evolution of the new Congress programme will be full-fledged constitutionalism, which means going back to the stage which existed previous to the inauguration of the Non-Co-operation campaign in 1919.

Though the Swaraj Party has failed, in the recent elections, to secure anything like a majority, a number of its candidates have gained seats at the expense of the prominent moderate and loyalist leaders. The men at the head of the Swarajists could not have had any illusions about the results of the elections; they knew quite well that they could not obtain a majority by themselves. Therefore, already before the election campaign was fully begun, they sought coalition with the left wing of the Liberal Party—the former leaders of the National Congress and representatives of the big bourgeoisie and progressive landlords.

Although such a coalition has not been formally accomplished, the parliamentary fraction of the Swaraj Party will be strongly diluted by out-and-out bourgeois members, who have been given the stamp of the Party during the elections in spite of the fact that most of these men never took any direct part in the Nationalist Movement. Their adhesion has been bought at a rather high price, since they do not subscribe to the tactics formulated by the Swarajists. In order, therefore, to retain them in its fold, the Swaraj Party will have to modify its parliamentary tactics. Thus the plan of " wrecking " the councils, of which so much has been talked, becomes totally problematical, since first of all there is no Swarajist majority, and, secondly, those who have been elected as Swarajists do not all unanimously subscribe to these tactics. What then can be left to the Congress led by a party in such an equivocal position, but to become, for all practical purposes, a party of the bourgeoisie, given over to constitutional agitation with the object of driving a bargain with Imperialism?

This shifting of the Nationalist Movement on to purely bourgeois grounds leaves the lower middle class and the masses out in the cold. But unrest is still acute among these elements, and the cause of this unrest cannot be removed short of a complete

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revolution. With the shattering of all its illusions, one after another, the petty bourgeoisie is in a pitiable condition; but there is a large unruly element within its ranks, the element which was the original vehicle of revolutionary expression in this country during the first period. These are the de-classed intellectuals, with absolutely nothing to lose but their prejudices. The collapse of the Non-Co-operation Movement and the reversion of the Congress to the old methods of constitutionalism have thrown these revolutionary elements back on their own resources, which, however, are not very great. They have returned to terrorism, which time and again has proven itself futile.

But the idealism and determination of this element are undeniable. Given a well orientated political leadership they are sure to give a better account of themselves. In view of the intellectual backwardness of the masses, it becomes historically necessary that the initial leadership of a truly emancipatory movement should come from these de-classed intellectuals. The cadre of a working-class party must be recruited for some time from its ranks. The clarification of the class-character of the Congress has made this task easier. The rapid development of bourgeois nationalism is dissipating many reactionary social and economic doctrines, which have until now confused the vision of the lower middle class of India.

Along with its contemporary, the Non-Co-operation campaign, the Khilafat Movement has also died of inanition. The dangerously reactionary tendencies embedded in this movement gradually paralysed its superficial political efficacy, and since last year led up to the religious and communal conflicts that have of late assumed such serious proportions in India as to put the nationalist leaders at their wits' end. Particularly in the northern provinces, where the Moslem population predominates, communal conflicts have become a veritable civil war, which is backed by the reactionary elements of both communities and deftly encouraged by the Government.

This logical development of the extreme fanaticism aroused by the Khilafat Movement led to the organisation of the All-India Hindu Sabha, in which all the reactionary tendencies of the Hindu community are crystallised. The avowed object of this Hindu organisation is the defence of its own community. Many prominent

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Congress leaders take an active part in supporting this reactionary Hindu movement—a fact which has given a handle to the Moslem clergy, landlords, and loyalist officials in their attempt to show up to the Moslem masses the " irreconcilable " hostility of the Hindus. A spirit of fanaticism, fomented by intense agitation for the defence of religion and social traditions, such as the Khilafat Movement called forth, can be easily diverted in any direction from which the attack upon religion is alleged to emanate. The Khilafat Movement has thus degenerated into a revival of the acute rivalry between the two great Indian communities. The result, so far as the Nationalist Movement is concerned, has been disastrous.

On the other hand, the bottom has been knocked off the Khilafat Movement as such by the march of events in Turkey. When the news filtered through that the Turks, who have been held up as custodians of the Khilafat, have themselves repudiated this antiquated institution, the task of maintaining the enthusiasm of the Indian Moslems on this issue became more and more difficult. Then it is not generally realised that very few of the real leaders of the Moslem community adhered to the Khilafat campaign. They merely " lay low " until the enthusiasm of the masses, aroused by quite other causes than the " Khilafat wrongs," but exploited by Khilafat enthusiasts, had subsided. These leaders have now started a campaign in favour of reconciliation with England. They have revived the old arguments, namely, that Moslems are in a minority in India, and that self-government on the principle of popular representation will put them under Hindu supremacy. Therefore, they argue, Moslem interests should be treated as a separate issue. Attempts made to revive the All-India Moslem League, which was a rival organisation to the National Congress until its absorption by the latter after the Lucknow Compact of 1916, are but other indications of the exceedingly shallow foundation upon which the " Hindu-Moslem unity " (founded upon the Non-Co-operation-Khilafat agitation) rested.

The leaders of both communities stand dismayed at the turn of events, which anyone with an ounce of foresight might have foreseen. Being unable to find a solution, they evade the issue, while the bitter communal conflict eats into the very vitals of the Nationalist Movement. The only solution of the present impasse lies

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in the total abolition of separate communal organisations, such as the Khilafat and Hindu Sabha, and placing the agitation among the masses more on a nationalist than on an extra-nationalist or communal basis—more upon the economic struggle than upon religious fanaticism. It is only by pointing out the identity of their class interests, as distinguished from sectional or communal ones, that a real and permanent unity can be established by the Indian masses.

This fact is strikingly demonstrated by the development of this semi-agrarian, semi-religious movement of the Sikhs in the Punjab, which developed as a local or rather a provincial issue, due to the failure of the National Congress to place it on a nation-wide basis. In this case, too, the bourgeois leadership sabotaged at every step the revolutionary tendencies of the movement, thereby seriously weakening its immense potentialities. The Sikh peasantry responded to the cry for " Reform of the Shrines," in the hope of gaining access to the temple lands. The Shrine Reforms Committee, controlled by the lay landlords (as distinguished from the clergy they were seeking to oust from control) and capitalists, did its best to confuse and sidetrack the dynamic forces of mass action that underlay and gave strength to the entire movement, While the rank and file were demonstrating their firm determination to carry on the fight to a finish, the Committee entered into negotiation with the Government and the Shrine authorities. Hoping to arrive at a compromise, the Committee suspended practically all militant activities, whose efficacy had been the only means of inducing the Government to negotiate. The latter was not slow to seize upon this internal weakness of the movement and rebuffed the Reforms Committee's overtures towards an understanding.

The result was a schism in the movement. The most militant section launched on a premature campaign of violence, which could only take the form of spasmodic and entirely ineffectual terrorism. The Government came down upon this element with the heavy hand of repression. On the other hand, its attitude towards the other elements in the movement likewise stiffened. The Reforms Committee started once more a campaign for mass demonstrations against the action of the Government. The latter replied by

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declaring the whole movement to be illegal and putting it under ban. More than three hundred of the most prominent Sikh leaders were arrested, including all the members of the Reforms Committee, while the organs of extremist Sikh opinion were suspended and their offices closed. The Government dared to take these drastic measures, which met with little or no opposition from the Nationalist Movement, because it judged the situation correctly. The National Congress, torn by communal and factional strife, was not in a position to come to the aid of the Sikhs; even had it been strong enough to do so, it had never understood the revolutionary significance and potentialities of the Sikh Movement, and would have opposed them, had it done so, even as it opposed the mass movement that threatened to overwhelm the constitutionalism of the Non-Co-operation Movement. Under no conceivable circumstances will the Congress, as at present constituted, subscribe to the slogan of "Land to the Peasant," which is the only objective cry for the Sikh Movement if it aims to hold its own against Government persecution and to realise its programme of Reform of the Shrines.

The programme of political independence, placed before the National Congress last year and repudiated by its leaders, has been taken up by a considerable section of the left wing, and a definitely worded resolution brought before the provincial conference of the United Provinces this year, defining the Congress objective as being "complete independence from all foreign rule," was adopted by a large majority. A study of the nationalist Press makes it clear that the ideology of the Indian movement is undergoing great changes towards the Left, no less than towards the Right. While until recently the programme of the National Congress was characterised by vague generalities about "Swaraj," to-day there is no political party in the country worthy of the name that does not contain clauses in its programme concerning the social and economic welfare of the masses. In every province, large masses of the petty bourgeoisie are looking for a new leadership. The slogan "Alliance with the Workers and Peasants" is rapidly gaining ground. A prominent Congressman, in moving the resolution on Labour Organisation in the Provincial Conference just referred to, came out openly and denounced the National Congress as the organ of the

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bourgeoisie, and called upon the revolutionary nationalists to throw in their lot with the masses. An ever larger body of opinion in the country holds to the idea that mere political freedom, without a complete social and economic revolution, will be a meaningless and futile phenomenon.

Thus the struggle against Imperialism is ever widening, and the element of class-conflict is being ever more clearly revealed and developed within the framework of the Indian body politic, as the political ideology becomes clarified and the Nationalist Movement divides itself into two streams—one "constitutional" and compromising; the other, by dint of economic pressure, ever more revolutionary and uncompromising in its struggle against a two-fold enemy, Foreign and Native Capitalism, which tend to unite in the end. Upon the future development of this struggle, and its ultimate outcome, hangs the fate of the three hundred millions of the Indian proletariat and peasantry.

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THE CLASS STRUGGLE IN GERMANY

By S. K.

FIVE years ago the small but determined group of Spartakists made an heroic attempt to transform the German revolution of November 9 into a real proletarian revolution. They were defeated, their leaders murdered, their followers pitilessly massacred. To-day, their murderers cannot but realise that they have led the labouring masses of Germany to catastrophe.

Five years ago all power lay before the German workers. If only they had taken all power into their hands, transformed all the machinery of State to their needs—Luxembourg and her friends showed them the line to follow—to-day they would not look on helplessly while they are robbed of the last remnant of their short-lived victory.

The days have passed when proud German Social-Democrats could be sarcastic about the Russian Communists " preparing the way for a military dictatorship." They were very bad prophets, for we have a Labour Government in Russia which day by day is increasing in importance, both at home and abroad, whereas Germany is under the dictatorship of General von Seeckt, and his fellow generals, taking their orders from the industrial magnates.

Still, however terrible the position of the masses in Germany to-day, the class struggle is just entering a new phase, which promises well for the workers. The workers of Germany to-day are quite different from the workers who remained indifferent to the calls of " Red Rosa." Their childish belief in the miraculous power of the Social-Democratic leaders, who were to lead them by a comfortable, dangerless way to Socialism, disappeared long ago. And the indifference into which they have since fallen is now giving way to that creative activity which will prepare them for the coming hard fight.

There is no need for any Bolshevik agitation to teach them the bitter truth about the democratic fallacy. They have tried the rule

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of every party—with the sole exception of that of the Communists—and are now in a state of oppression which is worse than at any period of the Hohenzollern autocracy. Politically, they are at the mercy of the military governors ; in the industrial field the doors of the factories are closed for them, even if they are willing to work for starvation wages ; and their families are standing in long queues before soup kitchens provided by charitable organisations. This is not a famine caused by natural disaster ; it is the consequence of a political disaster. The victors are living in luxury, whilst the defeated are decimated by starvation, disease, and persecution.

Germany presents a pitiful scene to-day, and reading the descriptions by impartial visitors will move the strongest man to tears. But when one is thinking over the disaster, it is impossible not to come to the conclusion that it could not be otherwise. There were and there are only two ways to solve the reparations problem : either Labour must make the capitalist pay for the destruction wrought by war at home, and pay also reparations to the victors so long as the military and international situation necessitates, or else the capitalists will force the workers to satisfy both the capitalist class at home and abroad.

There is no third way. When German Labour tried to find some other way, which would satisfy workers and employers and the victorious Entente, they were only preparing the way for the industrialists, who are less scrupulous in their methods.

The people who are in power to-day in Germany are the class-conscious bourgeoisie. It is really ridiculous to see the Social-Democratic old woman lamenting that she did not use the same weapons against Bavaria that they have used—with the silent consent of the Social-Democrats—against Red Saxony and Thuringia.

If Scheidemann and Müller do not see the difference, Stresemann, Stinnes, and Seeckt can easily distinguish a bourgeois reactionary State from one ruled by a Labour government including Communists.

The bourgeois politicians will not oblige the Social-Democratic leaders by massacring the Fascisti or any other reactionary organisation. These are all arming, whilst Saxony and Thuringia are

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occupied by military forces and the whole Communist movement is driven underground by the Emergency Law passed by the German Parliament.

As in their internal policy, the present dictators of Germany follow a logical class policy in international affairs. So long as they can come to an understanding with the French bourgeoisie, they do not mind a bit if France remains in the Ruhr for a few more years to come. Occupation, if directed against the workers, is not at all objectionable to Stinnes and von Seeckt. On the contrary, they ought to be grateful to the French army for helping them to oppress the workers, carrying through the re-introduction of the ten-hour day, &c., whilst the German army is keeping down the revolutionary workers of Saxony and Thuringia. Stinnes had declared, long before the occupation of the Ruhr, that an agreement must be arrived at between the French and German industrial magnates, even at the price of the occupation of the Ruhr.

There can be no doubt about it : the most important capitalist circles in Germany and France desire a close collaboration between the capitalist classes of the two countries. Of course, there are other industrial groups, and even more the military cliques, who are dead against an economic alliance which would end the thousand year old feud between the two countries (and thus spoil the business of these interested patriots).

And apart from this, it is not an easy task to agree on the terms of the industrial collaboration. The capitalist system alone, based on rivalry and not collaboration, makes it very difficult to arrange an enormous financial and industrial deal, such as is contemplated, to mutual satisfaction. France, stronger in military matters, naturally seeks to perpetuate her hegemony in Europe by dictating terms which would make Germany practically a colonial State, with millions of slaves subjected to the dual exploitation of their own industrial chieftains and of the rulers of France. On the other hand, the German industrialists, though ready to make very considerable concessions, demand an equal status and an equal share of profits in the new partnership.

It is easy to see that such collaboration as the Germans demand would be so advantageous to German capital as to soon endanger the safety of France. For if the German capitalists are willing to

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collaborate now with French capitalists on a 50 per cent. basis, that does not mean that to-morrow, if they feel strong enough, they will not start a new war to secure all the 100 per cent. profit. I cannot share the opinion held by many writers that, because the Germans failed to secure the French ore fields and the French, on the other hand, have not been successful in getting hold of the Ruhr coal and coke, it naturally follows that the two will easily agree on a plan of co-operation, or that this co-operation will be of a lasting nature. As I have said above the capitalists are trying hard to come to such an understanding. Before the Rathenau-Loucheur agreement, and still more since then, numerous attempts have been made towards such an understanding. Will they be much more successful this time? I doubt it very much. I think that some kind of temporary agreement will be arrived at, but nothing definite and final. Both parties are playing for time. The recent elections in Great Britain and the coming elections in France leave the situation so open that neither of the parties wish to bind themselves to an agreement which must give less than their exaggerated expectations.

It would be interesting to examine the economic position of both countries, which is of vital importance in the development of these negotiations, but this is hardly possible in the limits of a short article. The recent fall in the value of the franc clearly shows the financial difficulties France has to tackle, whereas the immense unemployment in Germany is an eloquent proof of the German industrial crisis. Obviously, something has to be done to restore confidence in the franc and give work to the millions of German unemployed. Though both depreciation of currency and unemployment are affecting first and foremost the wage-earners, they are a considerable danger to the ruling classes also. In view of this danger we might see very soon French and German capitalists shaking hands and coming to some sort of agreement, which, in my opinion, will not operate for very long.

What are German workers doing in face of these events? What is their policy against starvation, unemployment, long hours, dwindling wages, and political persecution? How do they view the coming agreement between French and German capital? As already stated the German working class as a whole is impotent

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to repulse the capitalists' attack, raging along the whole front. They have been rendered impotent by their short-sighted leaders, who in their vain attempt to please the bourgeoisie have split German Labour, disarmed the proletariat, and allowed the capitalists to grow more powerful than ever they have been. But it would be incorrect to believe that German Labour is out of action. In spite of the hunger, desperate strikes follow one another all over the country, forgetting all the traditions of the once great Socialist Party the thousands of workers united in the Socialist Party of Germany are organising a revolutionary left wing or leaving the party in order to join the Communists, and notwithstanding the Emergency Law the outlawed Communist Party of Germany is doing wonderful work in organising the revolutionary proletariat.

This is a very important aspect of the German situation, and it is worth while to look a little more closely into the nature of these working-class activities. Without being unduly optimistic, it is safe to say that though the complete victory of Capital brought endless suffering to the working class, it has also created the solid basis for a United Front of the proletariat.

There have been joint demonstrations before, but, immediately the occasion which brought the workers together was over, the workers separated anew and opposed each other in bitter controversy about Labour tactics. This happened after the Kapp "putsch," after the murder of Rathenau, &c. But now, when democracy is not existent even in name, when the eight-hour day has gone the way the other Labour successes had gone before, when the imposing edifice of the workers' organisations and of labour protection, built up in sixty years, has collapsed under the boots of General von Seeckt, there is hardly a worker left who believes that "the Communists are their worst enemies."

The gulf separating the Social-Democratic worker believing in democratic methods and the Communist worker organising direct revolutionary action was bridged when, with the support of the Social-Democratic parliamentarians, the late German Parliament passed the Emergency Laws. Since then, under the pressure of disastrous conditions, many former Social-Democrats have crossed the bridge to the Communist camp, and many more of them have remained in the old party only in order to press for

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the co-operation of the whole party with the Communist Party of Germany.

Passing over the sporadic strikes, which are a desperate attempt to hold up the avalanche and cannot result in Labour victories in the present relation of forces, the activity of the left wing of the Socialist Party attracts our special attention. A number of districts have severely censured the policy of the Party Centre and parliamentary fraction. On numerous occasions members of the Socialist Party have come out to demonstrate with the Communists, in spite of police prohibition.

That the Social-Democrat rank and file do not want any more coalitions with the bourgeoisie was shown very clearly at the formation of the last Thuringian government. On the fourth of January a new coalition government was formed in which, under the premiership of the Social-Democrat Heldt, representatives of the bourgeois parties (Democrat and People's Party) also took part. This was a direct breach of the decision of the last district congress of the Socialist Party, and only twenty-five members of the Landtag fraction supported the government. The minority of fifteen issued a declaration explaining why they dissented. The District Congress of the party took place two days afterwards, and by a large majority endorsed the policy of this minority, demanding the resignation of the government and a dissolution of the Landtag. But the government did not resign, and the twenty-five have appealed to the Party Congress, which will be held on March 30 in Magdeburg.

The above is one example of the fact that the unity of the United Social Democratic Party of Germany only exists now in the title of the party. Groups within the party have been formed all over the country, and the fight between the Right and the Left wing does not end in mere discussions. Both fractions are acting at times quite independently of the party apparatus, and it is visible to all that this apparatus, once so firm and disciplined, is now in the way of disintegration.

A still more important factor in the development of the class struggle is the progress made by the Communist Party. There is every reason to believe that the Communists are stronger than they have ever been before. Driven underground by the military

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dictators, their offices closed, their press suppressed, they did not lose their contact with the working masses. On the contrary, they are nearer now to the masses than before. The basic unit of the party has been transferred from the local group into the factory group, and there is no factory or any unemployed body where members of the Communist Party are not present to represent their party and influence the workers towards Communist policy and revolutionary action.

Illegal handbills and newspapers are printed in sufficient numbers to reach party members and sympathisers, and after some initial difficulties it seems as if the party machinery is functioning all right, in spite of the new illegal status to which it has had to adapt itself. A sign of its activities is that members of the legal Socialist Parties are still flowing into the Communist Party.

But it would be false to declare that a Communist revolution is at hand in Germany. The disintegration of the old mass party of the workers is well advanced, but the organisation of the new party of the masses is not strong enough yet to start the fight against the military dictators.

The class struggle has become much sharper since the middle parties have cleared the way. The middle class, represented by the parties of the Democrats and Centrists, have gone over to the victorious capitalists, and the Social-Democrats have been simply cleared away from the political arena. The capitalists have strengthened their position to such a degree that they think they can dispense with the services of the Social-Democrats. The only parties remaining for the next round of the political fight are the united bourgeoisie backed by the military machinery and numerous independent fighting units, and the Communist Party organising the proletariat under its generalship.

Both parties are following a clear class policy, are determined in action, and understand what the fight is for. So far as present strength is concerned, the capitalists are decidedly stronger; but their prospects for the future are in no way favourable. Though they have stabilised the mark, the collapse of their financial machinery cannot be delayed much longer. Though they have lengthened the working day, thanks to the enormous number of unemployed and the starvation of the masses, the evil of unemployment will

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soon prove disastrous for them. And the recent left-wing orientation in international politics is not a hopeful sign for the German dictators.

On the other hand, the Communists are in a much more favourable position so far as the future is concerned. They have to fight against tremendous odds at the present moment, but their organisation is getting to be equal to the occasion ; the unemployed masses are coming under their leadership, and the international situation is growing more favourable towards the formation of a workers' government in Germany. Though a Labour government in Germany means much more than a Labour government in this country, the latter would never send armies to strangle the German revolution, and might even hold in check the French imperialists. And Russia is becoming a formidable power, for the alliance of which all countries are contending at present.

Looking at such prospects, we very nearly forget the terrible happenings of the present. The way of the proletariat to power is not an easy one. But the German proletariat must surely have passed through the worst part of its journey during the past five years.

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THE LIMITS OF LABOUR POLICY

By J. L. MAHON

A LABOUR government would have a more difficult task than any other party government ; and the difficulty is not of a kind that can be overcome by bringing greater talents and virtues to the application of the same methods.

There is the old problem that capitalism has presented to society for a hundred years with intervals in which its urgency abated ; but it returns greater in magnitude, more prolonged in duration, more menacing in its demand for solution. Familiarity with the unemployed problem seems to have bred contempt for it in some quarters.

The Labour Party policy, as indicated in the election manifestos and speeches of its leaders, may be summarised as : (1) more relief work, (2) more State stimulation of capitalist industry, and (3) a more diligent search for extended foreign markets. Or, in a single phrase, forced lubrication of the capitalist system.

The new feature in the Labour policy is an extension of home demand for labour by a reconstruction of the great plants for generating light and power and for transport. Admitting (for the sake of argument) that this work should, on technical grounds, be done on a scale that would employ some substantial proportion of a million workers the question arises : What would be the economic effect of its successful progress ? The answer can only be in the alternative form, viz., in a capitalist economy the effect will be more unemployment ; in a socialist economy the effect would be a general reduction of the hours of labour or an increased distribution of wealth, or both in part.

When the Labour leaders felt the need for some new proposal they still looked for it inside the bounds of the capitalist system. If they are right in doing so they must be wrong in denouncing capitalism—however vague and general may be the terms of their denunciation.

A Labour policy must be based on an understanding of the

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economic limits of the capitalist system. To illustrate: when engineers are called upon to devise means of dealing with a new development they do not assume that a mere extension of scale or increase of speed of the known means will answer. There are certain laws of stress, speed, temperature, &c., which limit effective construction. If the new demands infringe these limits the whole problem must be reconsidered.

The solution of the problem is not limited by natural laws or conditions. There is no lack of natural resources, and the existence of unemployed labour side by side with these resources reduces the problem to a question of the direction or management of the labour of society. When tools, machinery, and general equipment are also in idle superabundance the problem is still more narrowed. It is not lack of education or of low temperature carbonisation. The limits are economic; or, in plain words, the general scheme of managing the labour and distributing the wealth of society is at fault.

The evils to be remedied are produced by leaving the direction of the labour of society to private enterprise. So long as Capitalism can expand by new investments abroad, it employs labour to make the machinery and material elements of those investments. This, however, soon aggravates the evil by setting up a flow of imports in payment of the profits on the outside investments. When this stage is reached the whole problem must be reconsidered—if only as a means of preventing social anarchy. A Labour Government must establish control over the operations of private enterprise and its measures of relief must tend steadily and not too slowly towards the creation of a Socialist system of economy. The old machine may be kept running, but it can never overtake the work which has already reduced its speed.

Lord Inchcape sees the problem only as the "consummate folly" of the wage earners. "There is a possible remedy for unemployment . . . in the hands of the trade unions. If they would stand aside with their rules and regulations as to minimum rates of wages, restricted hours of labour, and limited output and give economic conditions free play for a year or two." And he goes on to say, "I do not share the apprehension in which many people regard the possible advent of the Labour Party to power"

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and then to the usual threat that any interference with capitalism "would have instant and terrible reactions upon the workers of the country." [1]

Lord Inchcape's power must of course be over all party governments and in cases other than the Labour Party he must be able to exercise it quietly, without using public threats. This power is the anti-social concentration of financial power in the hands of a few men in the City of London who hold no public office or lawful authority. It may be well to describe in summary fashion the means for producing "instant and terrible reactions upon the workers of the country" if financial dictation is resented.

Within a week the bankers, who act as and for the money lenders, could throw the government administration into confusion. Their power to do this is in a contrivance known as the "floating debt." This debt varies at present from six to eight hundred millions as a total. It is represented by Treasury Bills of three months' duration. These bills are in weekly lots, so that about forty million pounds are due for payment each week. They cannot in fact be paid and are not intended or expected to be paid. A new lot replaces the old and by this continual renewal the bankers reap a weekly crop of profit termed "discount" and keep a rope round the neck of the Government. The Labour Party Government must put its head in the noose or find a new method of dealing with the bankers. The bankers can demand payment for the due bills and refuse to tender for the renewal of them. In that event the Treasury must print currency notes and pay the bills. Inflation of currency then develops and "instant and terrible reactions" leading to the state of German finance and trade sets in. The act of "inflation" is attributed to the Government, but it is an act forced on them by the bankers.

The effect of this weapon is all the greater because the use of it is always in the discretion of the bankers and the Government has no reply or defence except currency inflation. The bankers can play with the noose, or tighten it severely, or use it one week and be merciful the next, or draw it taut week after week, till the country is thrown into anarchy.

The War Bonds are the heavy artillery devised to supplement

[1] *Times*, December 13, 1923, p. 12.

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the machine guns of the floating debt bills. These bonds fall due for payment year after year in batches of hundreds of millions. As they also cannot be paid new bonds are issued and the bankers can extort larger amounts. These are "conversions." Within the last two years the National Debt was increased by over £130,000,000 by converting £100 bonds into bonds of over £130. While the Labour Party is talking about a capital levy the money lenders are imposing a capital levy. Payment in cash may be demanded for these bonds. The bond holder has an option to convert, but the Government has no option. Payment again can be made only by printing more currency notes and causing "instant and terrible reactions." The bonds are like the bills in one point: they extract a large profit and extract it in such a way that the money lenders have always a rope round the neck of the Government.

This money-lending tyranny has a similar hold on industry. Circulating capital can only be borrowed from the banks in the combine and fixed capital through firms of financiers. Competition is practically at an end. The State grants of money for trade and capital "facilities" are not, as generally represented, made by the Government. The money is first arranged for on the market by the borrower on such terms as the financial worthies think proper. The public Treasury guarantees the payment of interest and repayment of principal—bearing the loss, if any, and getting none of the profit, however large it may be. The effect is that both the employer and the State are fully in the clutch of the money lenders. An important secondary effect of monopoly in those transactions is that the bankers have a practical veto in the development of material capital and on the operations of the great mass of mercantile capital in foreign trade. They can throw business into the hands of combines as against individual companies or to some combines as against others. They could also produce a stoppage of industry to bring a Labour Government to reason.

The re-destruction of Europe is in the same hands. German and British capital are to be interwoven—and already are largely in that condition. But the neck of the German State must be decorated with a rope of the pattern worn by the British State. The reparation debt is to be fixed at £2,500,000,000 and

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transferred to an international financial ring for half that sum. By this operation the Allied Governments will get £1,250,000,000 and Germany will owe £2,500,000,000 to the financial ring. Germany will pay interest to the ring equal of 10 per cent. on the actual loan. After paying about £8,000,000,000 in interest in about forty years Germany will still owe the £2,500,000,000 and be where she started. The German Government, Republican or otherwise, will be controlled in all its finance by an International Committee, representing the united money lenders of Britain and Germany. The other Allies will be paid off, partly by inter-debt adjustments. That is the British plan of January, 1923; never challenged or even mentioned by the Labour Party leaders and repeatedly re-affirmed by the British Government. The negotiations include a provision that time shall, if necessary, be granted to the German Government (or the arrangement bearing that name) to force reduced wages and increased hours on the German workers. This "British" plan is, of course, the bankers' plan. The Labour Government must carry out this plan or incur "instant and terrible reactions upon the workers."

The Labour proposals for reducing food taxes and middle-class income tax and raising the "purchasing power" of wages will come to nothing. What capitalism gives to the wage-earner with one hand it takes away with the other. Its left hand always knows what the right hand doeth. If low prices ever come, low wages will quickly follow. If minimum wages are fixed by law, prices will rise. If both wages and prices are to be fixed by a Labour Government against capitalism and its trusts and rings, that Government will soon regret that it did not adopt the easier way of managing the national production without capitalist help.

The sum of the problem is that capitalism has all but fully blossomed into its pure Usury phase in less than ten years. The process was normally in operation before the war; but the war difficulty was seized on by the bankers to hasten the development at high speed. It was not wealth that was accumulated during the war as many, including some Labour Party leaders, have said. It was debt—a claim on the products of labour for all the years of the future, if we submit to it. When the money advanced has been repaid tenfold it will still be owing as in the beginning.

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Lest any innocent say that the Labour Party leaders intend to grapple with this tyranny I will quote their words :—

> It is well to remember that the war debt was a voluntary bargain.
>
> No Government deserves the confidence of the country . . . unless its undertakings . . . are honourably and scrupulously observed.
>
> Slum clearances, road improvements, public lighting, water, and transport undertakings, drainage schemes . . . would become absolutely out of reach.
>
> The weakening or the destruction of public confidence in the financial integrity of the Government must re-establish the reign of the private capitalist in every branch of the national life.

These extracts are taken from a written report,[2] prepared during twelve months' deliberation, and approved by the national executive of the Labour Party. In the words quoted and more elaborately in the context assurances are given that the new financial power which the money lenders have imposed on the country in the last few years is based on sacred contracts which a Labour Government will " honourably and scrupulously " observe.

If that is correct all Governments are only puppets in the hands of the bankers, who, as agents of the money lenders generally, constitute the real Government. The sacred contract has, however, one redeeming feature. It does not stipulate that the Labour Party is to form a puppet government. We can at least demand that the money lenders shall conduct the government openly and produce such " instant and terrible reactions upon the workers of the country " as they think desirable in their own name.

The first duty of a Labour Government is to free public life from the menace of this financial power.

[2] The Labour Party: Report of the Executive Committee, 1923, p. 129.

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The World of Labour

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RUSSIA

The Discussions in the Communist Party

THE discussions in the Russian Communist Party during the past three months have evoked a remarkable interest in the columns of the bourgeois Press of Europe. From the Riga correspondent of *The Times* to the leader-writer of the *Berliner Tageblatt* there has been the same eagerness to register what appears to be a split in the enemy's camp. The vehemence of the discussion has misled these observers. A more correct view was that of the *Manchester Guardian* correspondent, who pointed out that this vehemence was a sign of the vitality of the Party, and poured ridicule on the wild hopes of a "decay" of the Soviet power. Nevertheless, it is not enough to describe the point at issue, like the *Daily Herald*, as "the relaxation of the iron discipline and the rigid central control of the revolutionary years," and as a struggle of the "Young Guard" *versus* the "Old Guard." These questions are incidental to, and, indeed, arise out of, the main question—what is the position of the Party with regard to the present situation in Russia, that is, with regard to the struggle of the Workers' State on the economic front which was introduced by the New Economic Policy nearly three years ago?

It may be well to recall the words of Lenin, written early in 1921, on the introduction of the N.E.P. He wrote :—

> Is it possible to combine and to have side by side a Soviet State, the dictatorship of the proletariat, and State Capitalism?
>
> The whole question, theoretically and practically, lies in finding the correct means of properly guiding the inevitable (to a certain extent and for a certain time) development of Capitalism along the path of State Capitalism, and what conditions to establish and how to secure in the near future the conversion of State Capitalism into Socialism.[1]

This is still the fundamental issue confronting the Soviet Republic and its directing force, the Communist Party. And it is the issue underlying the present discussions.

With the peculiar dangers and difficulties of the N.E.P., and the new tasks this policy has set before the Communist Party, these discussions were bound to come; and they come naturally after the first year and a half of unfettered

[1] *The Meaning of the Agricultural Tax*, THE LABOUR MONTHLY, July, 1921, Vol. 1, No. 1, p. 28.

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economic development, when the civil war and the famine have been finally liquidated.

During the civil war and the period of "military Communism" the internal organisation of the Party was of necessity centralised to the last degree. Party officials were appointed from above, and all important decisions came down from above. There was a rigid central control and direction right through the Party. This has been continued through the first three years of the N.E.P. There can be little doubt that it was very necessary to do so, when the Party had to defend the foundations of the Workers' State against any possible encroachments of the "new capitalism." But to-day, after three years of the "new capitalism," those foundations remain unsapped and the Workers' State is more firmly established than ever.

On the economic side the chief present difficulty is the serious lack of correlation in the development of industry and agriculture. For while, owing to the good harvest, agricultural prices have slumped heavily (*i.e.*, the purchasing power of the vast mass of the population, the peasantry, is seriously diminished) the price of industrial products has mounted steadily. This phenomenon has been graphically described by Trotzky as the "shears"—the two blades, agricultural prices and industrial prices, moving further and further apart. The problem is to bring the blades together, to establish a price equilibrium between industry and agriculture. This demands, on the side of industry, that the "State Economic Plan" shall become a reality, that there shall be national and unified economic direction. At the Twelfth Congress of the Party, in April, 1923, Trotzky emphasised these points in his "Theses on Industry."[2] In those "Theses" also he declared that—

> the Party must clearly realise that at the present constructive-economic period of the revolution its most fundamental work lies in guiding economic activity in the basic points of the Soviet process of construction.

This "most fundamental work" can only be successfully carried out if the internal life of the Party is vigorous, if the spirit of initiative among Party members is fully developed, and the contrary bureaucratic spirit effectively combated. The position at present is that the rigid central control of the Party has tended rather to the development of bureaucracy. Party members have grown accustomed to receive instructions from the higher authorities of the Party, and to be more or less completely absorbed in the daily task of carrying out these instructions. As a result, they have to some extent lost the capacity to grapple with the new problems which are continually arising in the course of development of the N.E.P. On the other hand, the non-party workers, owing to the improvement in wages and conditions, and the resultant demands for more education, political and cultural, and better organisation, are in some cases more advanced than the mass of Party members.

Zinoviev opened the discussion in an article entitled "The New Tasks of the Party," published in *Pravda* on November 7, 1923, the sixth anniversary of the Revolution. He emphasised the points already alluded to above, laying special stress on the need for getting the non-party workers, who in many cases

[2] The Labour Monthly, July and August, 1923, Vol. V, Nos. 1 and 2, pp. 19-29, 95-104.

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possess greater technical and administrative skill than Party members, into the ranks of the Communist Party. It is, therefore, necessary to "speed up," as it were, the internal life of the Party, to turn the rigid military machine of the civil war into a flexible instrument more suited to the present more complex struggle in the field of economic construction.

Preobrazhensky, in reply, in *Pravda* of November 28, argued that Zinoviev had not directed attention to the problem itself. It is necessary, he said, to discover whether the fundamental lines of Party policy, so far as organisation and the internal affairs of the Party are concerned, have been correct during the N.E.P. or not. To this he replied in the negative. In order to meet successfully the complex and rapidly changing situation created by the N.E.P.

> It would have been necessary to create in our organisations an internal life other than that of the period of armed struggle . . . . military methods must be liquidated . . . . every member should be able to participate more actively and more consciously in the decisions of the Party.

Preobrazhensky, in short, declared that the Party needed a final transition from the methods and organisation of the civil war period to what is called in the Russian Communist Party "labour democracy," *i.e.*, freer elections of officials and committees (particularly in the units of the Party, the factory nuclei) and opportunity for preliminary discussion in the localities of important Party questions. At the Tenth Congress of the Party (March, 1921) resolutions on "labour democracy" had been passed, but had remained a dead letter. The matter came up again officially at the October (1923) full session of the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission of the Party, which—

> approved entirely the proposals of the Political Bureau concerning the realisation of democracy within the Party, as well as the reinforcement of the campaign against luxury and the demoralising influence of the N.E.P. over certain elements in the Party.

Trotzky has written a letter condemning bureaucracy within the Party, and analysing its dangers. This letter definitely aligns him with the opposition.[3]

The slight anxiety of the "old" Bolsheviks with regard to democracy within the Party has been expressed by Kalinin. In a speech he said :—

> Let us not forget that the essential thing is not democracy, but the maintenance of the conquests of the revolution. We have conquered and, it is said, "the victors are never judged." Perhaps: but this specific fundamental quality of the Bolsheviks, the recognition of authority, has also contributed to our victory. Now we wish at all costs to maintain this quality, acquired by decades of experience and struggle.

Kamenev also uttered a warning. He wrote under the heading "What We Must Not Do" :—

> We must not arouse one section of the Party against another. We must not substitute the breaking-up of the Party machine to its necessary repair and renewal. We must not replace the difficult and delicate work of the selection of candidates for office by the slogan "dismissal of nominees."

[3]Extracts from this letter are held over this month for lack of space.

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Arising out of the vigorous polemic on bureaucracy, democracy within the Party, and so forth, has come the question as to whether it is permissible to form groups or fractions within the Party. On this point the discussion has been even violent: in particular, the opponents of the "opposition" have accused them of forming an illegal fraction within the Party. The "opposition" have denied this charge; and there does not seem to be any serious basis for it. The mass of polemic is already so vast and so recondite, especially on this question of groups and fractions, that it is almost impossible to disentangle the real truth of the matter. The clearest statement appears to be that of Boguslavsky, contained in a letter to *Pravda* :—

> I consider as absolutely inadmissible the existence not only of fractions, but of any groups having a discipline of their own distinct from that of the Party as a whole. Nevertheless, the intervention of two, three, or more comrades, on one single question, on which they have the same opinion, cannot and should not be considered as a sign of the existence of fractions or groups.

The most outstanding feature of the discussion so far has been the unanimous adoption of a long resolution on Party Organisation by the Central Committee and the Central Control Commission, at their joint session on December 5. This resolution will go before the Thirteenth Congress, which is being held this month (January). It is unfortunately too long to quote in full: we hope to reproduce the most significant portions next month. In the resolution the approach to the view point of the "opposition" is very noticeable. The first two sections of the resolution are occupied with an analysis of the position of the Party under the N.E.P., and of its relations with the non-party masses of workers. It continues with detailed proposals of "immediate steps for realising labour democracy," the tasks of the Party Control Commissions, the Party and economic work, and, finally, the participation of the masses in the work of the Party.

The latest development is that at the Moscow Provincial Conference of the Communist Party on January 9, the following declaration was made by Preobrazhensky :—

> The one fact that the Central Committee has adopted unanimously the resolution on the internal position of the Party has deprived the opposition of four-fifths of its arguments . . . The opposition recognises the present position of the Central Committee as essentially correct, and it simply proposes certain changes in formula which, in its opinion, are more exact.

The conference passed a vote of confidence in the Central Committee by 325 votes to 61.

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BOOK REVIEWS

A NEW CHAPTER IN THE WORLD REVOLUTION

Germany in Transition. By M. Philips Price. (Labour Publishing Company, London. 5s.)

> *. . . the autumn months of* 1923 *marked a turning-point in the history of Germany, and, through Germany, in the history of the whole of mankind. The German proletariat is turning with trembling fingers the most important pages in the history of the world struggle of the working class. The hour is about to strike. A new chapter in the world proletarian revolution is about to begin.*

THUS Zinoviev in the *Communist International.* There were days when we would have taken words like this to mean: "This, then, is the moment of crisis, the next will be the moment of the Revolution"—thinking of the workers of Germany as inspired and united, ready for the simple task of "striking the blow" to end the tyranny of capitalism. But we have learned since then, and, in many matters, Germany has been our best teacher.

This new chapter will be yet another stage of our schooling—and it shows every sign of being a long one. In this stage we shall have the imperialist capitalism of Britain, France, and America, its designs for preparing Germany for economic vassalage approaching fruition, entering upon the task of exploiting the new colony. Financial "stabilisation" and loans have already become the subjects of discussion, rather than how to get cash out of Germany. And the basis upon which the "stabilised" structure will rest, the material with which its machinery will work, to produce the profits which will reward the foreign investors, is, of course, the German proletariat—starved, sweated, and overworked. In this stage, therefore, the German workers enter upon a keener economic struggle than heretofore, and, in fighting their employers, they will be fighting a world league of finance capital. They will have to meet—they are already meeting—a fiercer attack on their organisations, trade union and political, than ever before. By cajolery, and by the bludgeon, they are being robbed of the last relics of their gains in the revolution of November, 1918, and the machinery of the law is at work to wreck the organisations which might preserve to them those gains—such as a fixed working day—as well as to proscribe and suppress their revolutionary parties.

It is, then, a stage of hand-to-hand struggle, a "bar nothing" fight; one in which, surely, none of the illusions which have hitherto blinded many of the German workers and their leaders can survive. The German worker has been brought to the position of paying all for the salvation of—what? For a system which he now knows supports nothing but a class which is leagued with "enemy" capitalists for his exploitation.

How is the German working class going to face this situation? How will it wage war with this world league of plunderers? That is a question of as great importance for us as for our German comrades. It can only be answered by

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careful remembrance of the struggle of the past four years. It is, therefore, an event of importance that M. Philips Price should, at this moment, have published some of the results of his years of observation in Germany.

This is the first time that an English writer has reviewed the events of the German Revolution and the subsequent four years, and analysed them, from a Marxian point of view. The result is inspiring, and we say this deliberately with a full recollection of the terrible implications of the situation which we have endeavoured to indicate in the opening of this review. There were high hopes in great masses of the German people in November, 1918, and now there is widespread depression. How, then, can the story of the intervening years be inspiring? It is so because, while the story shows the illusory nature of the grounds on which the hopes of 1918 were based, it shows also that there has been throughout a body of people in Germany, growing in numbers and knowledge, despite treachery and murder, which has read the story as it was written and has understood it. And the story also shows how inexorable is the coming of that moment when the very actions of the capitalist exploiters themselves will lead the workers to overthrow them—and to follow the lead of those who have been learning and teaching.

In the final sentences of his book Mr. Price says:—

> The victory of the Revolution in the future is the only guarantee to the independent existence of the German State, and of an un-enslaved German working class. Its second defeat, on the other hand, will mean decay of German civilisation and the reversion of Central Europe to barbarism . . . The aversion of the danger is only possible if, in the near future, the united working-class front is established in Germany. In its creation the German Communist Party is called upon to play a most important rôle.

What is this Communist Party? It is the product of the labours of that little band, the *Spartakusbund*, whose leaders, Rosa Luxembourg and Karl Liebkneckt, called together the first congress of the Communist Party of Germany in December, 1918, in Berlin, while the workers were fighting the reaction let loose by the Social-Democrats. In the programme adopted by that Congress there occur these passages :—

> The proletarian revolution is the death-bed of slavery and oppression. For this reason all capitalists, Junkers, members of the petty middle class, officers, and all those who live on exploitation and class hegemony, will rise against it to a man in a struggle for life and death. . . .
>
> The class of capitalist imperialists exceeds all its predecessors in undisguised cynicism, brutality, and meanness. It will defend its most sacred profits with tooth and nail. . . . It will rouse heaven and hell against the proletariat. It will mobilise the peasantry against the towns, the backward elements of the working class against the Socialist advance guard. . . .
>
> The fight for Socialism is the most gigantic civil war in history, and the proletarian revolution must prepare the necessary defence for this war. It must learn to use it, to fight, and to conquer. This . . . is what is known as the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. This, and this only, is the true Democracy.

A few weeks after this manifesto was issued, Rosa Luxembourg and Karl Liebknecht had been murdered by reactionary officers masquerading as protectors of the Republic. A few months later, thousands of workers had been slaughtered by White Guards organised by Noske, the Social-Democrat

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Minister of War, because they were organising in Workers' Councils and were striking for demands which threatened the Entente which Social-Democracy was establishing with Capitalism. Three years later, while the "enemies" of Germany were invading the Ruhr to seize "pledges" for the payment of reparations, German capitalists, taking long views into the future, were negotiating with these "enemies" for advantageous terms upon which both sides might exploit the subjected working class of Germany for profit. And, at the same time, the very words of the manifesto were being fulfilled, for the Fascist organisations, the subsidised catspaws of Capitalism, were striving to enrol the peasants and workers of southern Germany in fighting bands against the revolutionary working class.

Four years later, and the unmasking of Capitalism, and the fulfilment word for word of that manifesto of December, 1918, are complete. The cynicism and brutality of the Capitalist Imperialist class has become a slave-master's lash, which every German worker feels, and from which he knows no respite. That is his goad—and whither is it driving him?

From that small *Spartakusbund* of 1918 has grown a Communist Party of 300,000 members or more.

But it has not been a simple and steady growth, in which disillusionment has been followed by immediate putting forth of revolutionary wisdom. The German Communist Party has been sadly afflicted by that "infantile sickness" which Lenin diagnosed. Price shows this clearly enough. In a few words he puts the futile revolt of March, 1921, in a clear light. "A purely local issue, on which it was impossible to arouse the rest of Germany, was artificially expanded into a national issue, with, of course, disastrous results." That, and other errors, proved that the German working class had not yet found revolutionary leaders who understood the nature of the battle they had to fight. But now, when, as we have said, the fight has become uncompromising, there is only one party in Germany which insists steadily on the all-important point—the united front of the working class.

We have mentioned Social-Democracy in passing. There must be many members of the British Labour Movement to whom the shame of the German Social-Democratic Party is still a mystery. It was, in pre-war days, the greatest of all Socialist parties. It was regarded as a model of efficiency. Its members knew of the theories of Marx, which was a rarity in England. There was a thrill in the fact that Socialists took the reins of Government in November, 1918. How is it that now the Social-Democrats have no claim to the leadership of the German working class? Whoever still seeks an answer to this question will get it from Price's book. He will find ample proof that Social-Democracy is powerless and discredited, and he will find the reasons told in such a story that one might hesitate to believe, were it not told largely in the words of supporters and tools of the capitalists and their Social-Democratic allies. For that is the part played by the Social-Democrats in the Revolution of 1918 and onwards—the part of subservient allies to the bourgeoisie which, bent on winning the last round of its fight with the Junkers, who, as survivals of feudal landlordism, hindered the full development of capitalist imperialism, was nevertheless thoroughly awake to the necessity of crushing the workers' movement towards revolution. Right nobly did the Social-Democrats serve

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the bourgeoisie to this end. The words of one reactionary, Rudolf Mann, an officer in the notorious Ehrhards' marine brigade must suffice. When Noske, early in 1919, was forming his White Guards for the suppression of the Factory Councils and the crushing of strikes, Mann wrote of him : "It was his service that he put the right men in the right military posts, gave them complete authority and abundant money for their work. The volunteer corps were expensive, but this was the only way to create a centre of authority. Without this, the Revolution would have overwhelmed Germany."

And later we find a Social-Democrat leader, Anton Fischer, taking money from a foreigner to help this White Guard organisation, and to "put out placards and organise speakers to counteract the work of Lenin and the Spartakists."

Once more let us recall that, four years later, a dictatorship of Capitalism exists in Germany, which is forcing the workers to work longer hours, to take less pay, to the benefit of the world league of capitalists. What German worker can remember the record of the Social-Democrats, while they held power, and feel anything but contempt for them ? This is surely the bitterest of all the chapters in the history of the past four years. But it explains much, and it is necessary to that process of learning which, as we have said, is the way to the building of a real revolutionary army.

The Social-Democrats were the victims of illusions about the possibility of working for reform inside the capitalist system. That is their downfall in Germany. But it is the capitalists, and not they, who have proved this to be an illusion. This is made clear in Mr. Price's admirable section on the Versailles Treaty, which is too detailed to be summarised here. But the deduction may be put in very few words. The new fields for exploitation, which were the objects of the war, are the flesh and blood of Germany's workers. They will pay reparations ; they will provide profits for the surplus capital of British, French, American, and German financiers. That is why they will realise that there is no "reform" under capitalism for them, and why their backs are already turned on Social-Democracy, and their faces towards Revolution. W. M. H.

THE BOURGEOISIE LOOK AT THEMSELVES

Babbitt. By Sinclair Lewis. (Jonathan Cape.)

The Death of Ivan Ilytch. By Leo Tolstoy.

IT was Bernard Shaw who said that the much-praised works of the Russian dramatist Tchekov were a study of the English middle class, "the same nice people, the same utter futility" ; and proceeded to call his own *Heartbreak House* "a fantasia in the Russian manner on English themes." No one doubts that this is just or that there exists a European middle class. But some may still imagine that the rising bourgeoisie of America are different, that they are still vigorous and have some meaning in their lives. Mr. Sinclair Lewis comes along to tell us that these imaginations are vain, and that in America there is not merely the same futility but futility standardised and unvarying.

Babbitt is a real estate agent who lives in the growing city of Zenith. There are Zeniths all over the United States and hundreds of Babbitts in each.

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He differs in no way from other minor profit-makers all over the world, except that his house is full of American gadgets, made of metal and kept quite clean, and that he runs down in his proud little car (he is one of twelve million such owners) to his futile office in the morning. It is a fascinating book, all the more so that, when you have read a chapter wherein Babbitt and cronies exchange the same old pleasantries or heavily repeat with a proud sense of original thought all the stock prejudices of the middle class, you know that in London anywhere you can find exactly the same thing happening. In any city restaurant you can hear them, after their second whisky, voicing one after another exactly the same machine-made opinions. The faithful description of the lives of Babbitt and his friends is good because it is faithful. But the real interest comes when Babbitt, dimly realising the futility of it and groping for an escape, is ruthlessly hurled back by the social and business pressure of his peers. There is no escape for Babbitt. Then is made clear the power of class over any except the most ferociously self-willed and independent of its members. He was born Babbitt and he will die a Babbitt. "Change of Heart" be damned!

Tolstoy is much more terrible. *The Death of Ivan Ilytch* has never been read eagerly, like *Babbitt*. Where the American has merely comic perplexities and doubts, the dying Russian lawyer looks back on his life, sees at it were the whole life of the middle class, and, knowing that his soul will shortly be required of him, is driven into a despair that nothing lightens. The reader walks in darkness, and when Ivan Ilytch begins to scream, that terrible scream that lasted through three days and nights until his death, you almost feel you must stop your ears. But there is one being who lives on, really living. The peasant boy, Gerasim, whom Ivan would have to tend him in his weakness, brings in a fresh atmosphere from the peasant fields. The world is not made up of Ilytch and his kind.

Nor is America made up of Babbitt and his kind. In the background of the futilities of Zenith there are processions of women just dimly visible, there is a fear of "Reds," there are starving bands of strikers. Vergil Gunch and the others may rescue a Babbitt from straying into a kindly feeling towards the proletariat. But they will not be able to rescue themselves or their class when that proletariat awakens; and when by a transformation scene the background to these futilities advances, no longer dimly visible but filling the whole stage.

R. P. A.

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